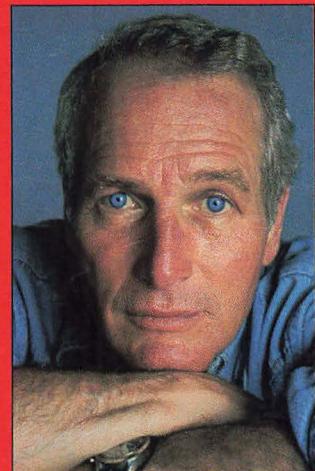


►BONUS TAPE TESTS/‘THE HUSTLER’ RETURNS◀

# Video Review

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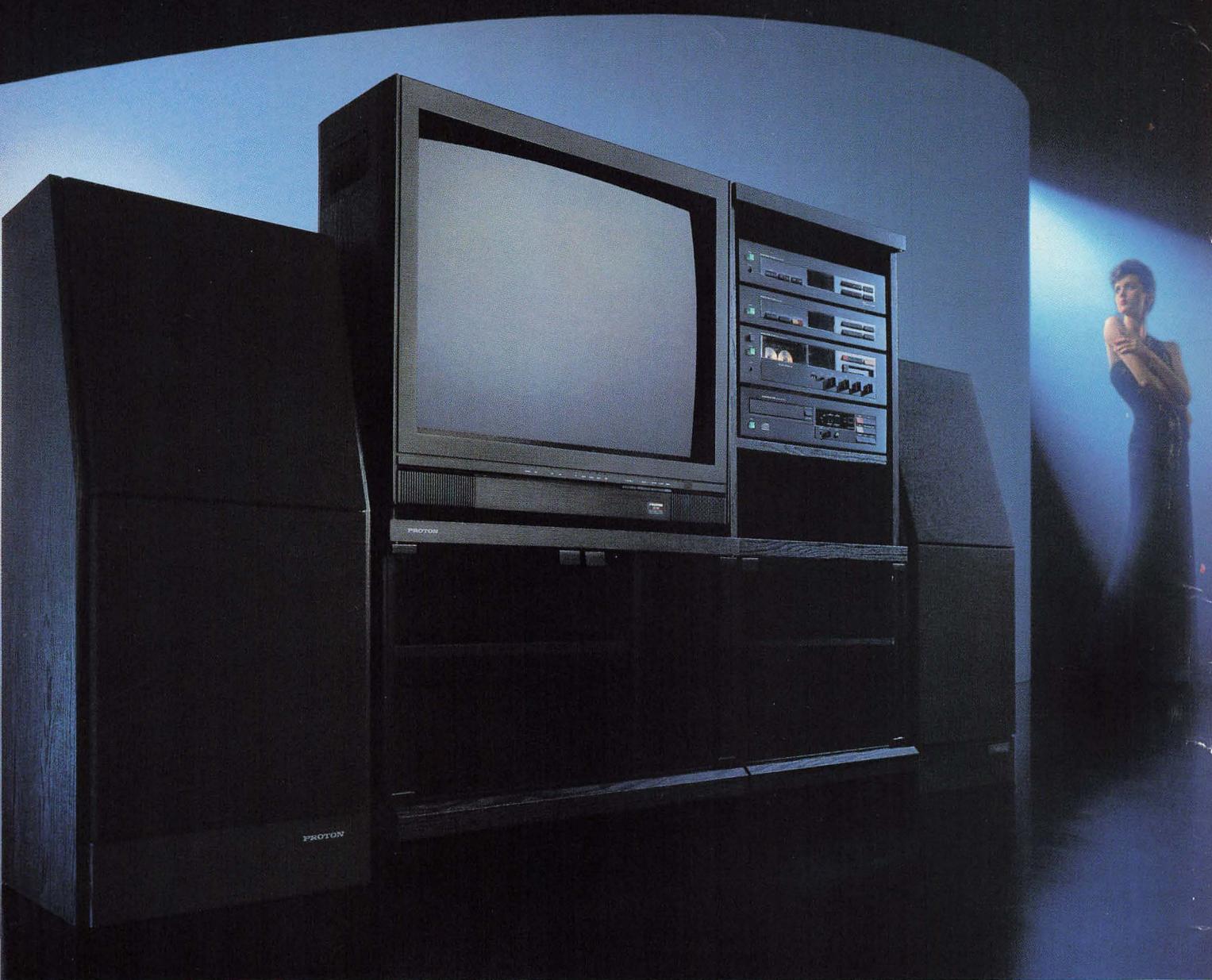
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- Full-Size, 8mm, VHS-C—What To Look For And Buy
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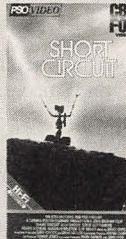
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# CONTENTS

39



## FEATURES

### '87 Camcorders

If you're thinking about buying one, this is the story for you. *VR* describes all formats, all models, everything necessary to get you started. *By Glenn Kenny* ..... 39

### Great Gear!

It's June and a man's fancy turns to ... electronic equipment. Our picks for the best gifts for graduations and Father's Day ..... 44

### Summer Smashes

A sneak peek at some of the biggest new movies coming soon to a video store near you. *By Roy Hemming and Gregory P. Fagan* ..... 48

### The Pusher

The true confessions of a remote control junkie. *By Doug Garr* ..... 52

### Sports Illustrated

How to tape your kid's games like a pro. *By Deirdre Condon* ..... 54

### And Now, CD-V

Just when you thought you've seen every video format imaginable, along comes compact disc-video! *By James B. Meigs* ..... 58

### Coming Clean

Video head cleaners can be awfully confusing. Here's the straight story on how they work, what's available and which type is right for your VCR. *By Gregory P. Fagan* ..... 60

### Michael Nesmith Interview

He's a video visionary who also happened to be a member of the Monkees.

A probing, insightful conversation. *By Marc Berman* ..... 64

## EQUIPMENT

**Reviews:** The Advanced Product Evaluation Laboratory and technical editor Len Feldman report on 14 blank VHS-C tapes ..... 68

**Hands-On:** Associate editor Glenn Kenny tests Zenith's new Hi-Fi camcorder ..... 74

**Previews & On the Drawing Boards** ..... 78

## TAPES & DISCS

**Latest Movies:** *The Color of Money* and *True Stories* (Neal Gabler)...*Children of a Lesser God* (Andrew Sarris)...*Tai-Pan* (Joanna Langfield)...*Little Shop of Horrors* (Jeffrey Lyons)...*Mona Lisa* (Janet Maslin)...*Nothing in Common* (Maury Z. Levy)...*Streets of Gold* and *Big Trouble in Little China* (Mark Trost)...*Reform School Girls* (Doug Brod)...*All Creatures Great and Small*

(Curt Gathje)...*Psycho III* (Michael J. Weldon)...plus other reviews ..... 83

**Classics:** *The Emperor Jones* and *Paul Robeson: Tribute to an Artist* (Andrew Sarris)...*Roberta, Dancing Lady, Broadway Melody of 1940* and *Murder at the Vanities* (Roy Hemming)...plus other reviews ..... 94

**Discs:** *Swing Time* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (David Hajdu)...*Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (David J. Elrich) ..... 98

**Music:** *The Prince's Trust All-Star Rock Concert* (Robert Christgau and Carola Dibbell)...*Soul to Soul* (Jim Farber)...plus other reviews ..... 100

**The Arts:** *The Maria Callas Concerts 1959-1961* (Allan Kozinn)...*Reflections of a Dancer—Alexandra Danilova* (Clive Barnes) ..... 102

**Info Vid:** *The March of Time: Show Business at War (1939-1946)* (Leonard Maltin)...*A Professional Approach to Video Weddings* (Deirdre Condon) ..... 104

**Kid Vid:** *Toddler Tunes & Tales* and *Baby Songs* (Genevieve Kazdin)...*The Homer Price Stories* (Randi Hacker)...plus other reviews ..... 106

## TELEVISION

**Reviews:** *The House of Blue Leaves* (Robert DiMatteo)...plus unusual and rare

**Movies on TV** in brief ..... 108

**Previews:** The coming month's watchables and tapeables ..... 112

## DEPARTMENTS

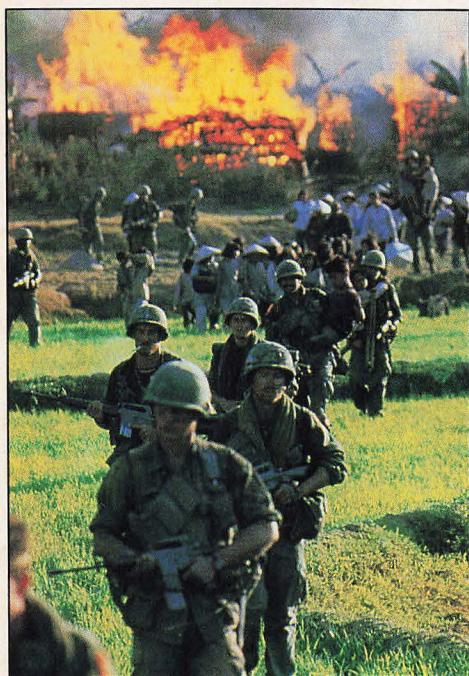
**Upfront** ..... 4 **Newsbreaks** ..... 26

**Letters** ..... 6 **Looking Ahead** ..... 32

**Video Hunter** ..... 12 **Audio for Video** ..... 34

**Questions** ..... 14 **Viewpoint** ..... 36

**Freeze-Frames** ..... 16 **Backspace** ..... 132



48



68

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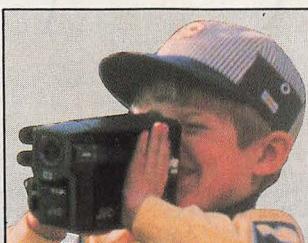
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## **Some Strategy For The Camcorder War**

I just got caught in the middle of one of those bloody soccer riots. It was an ugly sight—all the pushing, shoving and trampling. No, this wasn't somewhere in South America. This was somewhere in South Jersey. That's where my kids practice to be Pele. A very strange thing has been happening lately on the Little League playing fields of America. The real action is now on the sidelines. It's the battle of the network fathers.

Armed with a full variety of camcorder brands and formats, these new weekend warriors aren't afraid to take their VHS-C beyond the DMZ to capture for posterity little Danny making a penalty shot. I've actually seen an outraged referee call a penalty on a team of nine-year-olds because one father refused to pull a leg of his tripod off the playing field. I've seen games held up while irate parents argued an offside call with an official, insisting that he come watch the videotape replay. To be honest, though, I've gotten caught up in some of the craziness. I now find myself showing up for games a half hour early, just to stake out my spot at midfield and make sure those amateurs don't get in my way.

And now the biggest argument on the sidelines isn't about who has the better team, but over which format is best. Camcorders have been selling so fast, you need a scorecard to keep track of them all. Which brings us to this issue. We offer, within, a complete Buyer's Guide to the very latest in camcorders. You'll see the systems of today and read about the formats of the future. Also, following our 8mm tape test (and preceding next month's full VHS tape test) we offer an exclusive APEL appraisal of VHS-C cassettes. There's even a story with secret strategies for doing your own outdoor taping.

If you've been thinking about a camcorder, this issue's for you. Go ahead, have a ball.

*Maury Z. Levy*

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# The Best Of The Worst, And Beta Sez, 'I'm Not Dead Yet'

## INSULTING REASONING

It really does seem like the video companies are trying to make enemies out of the people who buy and use their products. First there was Macrovision. Now you've reported that the prices for this year's video releases will probably be going up \$20 a tape ("Newsbreaks," February '87 VR). The reasoning: "They're riding a seller's market and . . . demand will continue unabated regardless of price." What? Do they think we're that stupid? All that the higher prices are going to do is push the Macrovision busters to refine their machines, and make honest video movie fans turn to pirating copies of their favorite new movies. One hundred dollars for a movie? People are now pirating tapes that cost \$70! This move to raise prices is just going to cause more pirating problems.

Why doesn't the industry take its cue from Paramount and that company's \$29 prices? Why does it seem like these people are cutting their own throats?

David A. Drake  
Sunrise, FL

## CRAZY FROM THE STREEP

To say that *Out of Africa* was the worst video release of last year is flat-out crazy



Africa's Meryl: out of your mind?

("Backspace," April '87 VR). Perhaps you should consider only employing people who can tell time and tie their shoelaces.

Wayne Tomlinson  
Savannah, GA

## PEE-WEE'S BIG DEFENDER

Not too long ago, a gray-suited rebel climbed upon his bike and stormed across American movie screens, literally to the

delight of millions. Not so shortly thereafter, this young hero who stands for the pop culture of the '80s touched even more lives through the release of his critically acclaimed movie on videocassette. Because of this, it's quite shocking to me that Andrew Sarris would choose *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* as one of his *worst* video releases of 1986 ("Backspace," April '87 VR).

Personally, I very much look forward to Pee-wee's next theatrical release due out later this year. In the words of Pee-wee, Mr. Sarris: "I know you are, but what am I?"

Doug Phillips  
Seattle, WA

## SERVICE WITH A SMILE

I'm a dedicated hacker on the tennis court, so I was more than intrigued by Molly Haskell's review of *Tennis: Workout to Win* in your March issue. Sounds like my game could use this tape, but I've been unable to find it. Where can I write or call?

Dorothy Barcan  
Great Neck, NY

•The company that released the tape, Vision Media, is located at 625 Broadway, Suite 902, New York, NY 10012. —Ed.

## WHY NO AKAI?

I would like to inquire why, in your last two product Buyer's Guides to TV sets (March and April '87 VRs), you did not include Akai products. I bought an Akai monitor/receiver (CT-A262) one year ago and am very happy with its performance.

Richard Del Balso  
Spokane, WA

•In an effort to keep these Buyer's Guides as up to date as possible, these products were excluded. Presently, Akai no longer manufactures monitor/receivers. —Ed.

## WE'RE AGAINST IT

Ditto and hurray for Joe Horka Jr. ("Letters," April '87 VR). Did you ever try to explain to an uninterested part-time high school clerk that *Wildcats* pulsated and changed colors from start to finish? Or what

Selected correspondence addressed to **Video Review**, 902 Broadway, New York, NY 10010, is printed in the "Letters" section, space permitting. VR reserves the right to edit and condense selections for publication. Sorry, no personal replies.

Macrovision even is? And then try to get rental credit? Or purchase credit?

I'm tired of watching my \$500 VCR and \$600 TV get fouled up by a two-bit process. But whose fault is it? The paranoid marketeers? No. It's *our* fault, for continuing to rent or buy their stupid movies. Well, no more! I am personally boycotting the rental/purchase of all movies for three months. And if after that time they still try to shove Macrovision down our throats, I'll join Mr. Horka in a return to radio.

T. Ray  
Mesquite, TX

One thing that has been made perfectly clear by Joe Horka Jr.'s letter is that it's about time for the movie, music, videocassette and cable TV industries to stop biting the hands that feed them. Brewing public bitterness against the entertainment industries won't be healthy for any of their profits. Charging \$90 for a \$5 standard grade videocassette with a movie on it (particularly one



Goldie Hawn pulsates in *Wildcats*.

whose picture quality has been compromised by anticopying signals) is a rip-off. So is padding cable TV rosters with shopping channels (which prey on credit card abusers among bored housewives), then turning around and raising the rates every three months.

As for the scrambling of advertiser-supported satellite signals, it's a blatant attempt to put cable TV systems in a stronger posi-

tion to raise basic cable rates under deregulation. And many of the commercial channels resorting to this scrambling are doing so against a backdrop of blackmail from cable systems ("scramble or we drop you from our system").

Furthermore, the anticopying chip concept is laughable in its naivete: There's only about a million electronics technicians across the country who can easily bypass it. Does Jack Valenti plan on forming an audio/video secret police to go around to our homes to check every VCR to make sure we haven't removed the malevolent chip? I'm tired of hearing these entertainment moguls whining and griping about the very people on whom they depend for their livelihood.

Phil Cohen  
Bay Harbor, FL

### THE PREMATURE BURIAL

I read in February "Newsbreaks" that several manufacturers of blank Beta tapes are slimming down their product lines. Under the doom sayer headline, it boiled down to the loss of oddball lengths leaving the standard L-750 untouched.

I'm curious, how many VHS tapes are sold at lengths other than the standard T-120? Where are the headlines saying that these odd-size tapes are dying?

Really now, there will always be a market for Beta tapes thanks to those with past experience with the format, and to the strong possibility that local stations might switch to Beta as Sony seems to be phasing out its old U-matic machines.

In my city there is one Beta specific store for rentals and several that carry both formats. The top electronics store, which has been in business for 40 years, stocks 1-to-1 Beta to VHS and handles the state-of-the-art Super Beta Hi-Fis, doesn't seem to be hurting for customers.

In other words, why the obituary? Beta is far from dead.

Archer Gravely  
Roanoke, VA □

### Ferris Bueller Update

Paramount Home Video has informed *VR* that, contrary to Jeffrey Lyons' review in our May issue, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* is not being released in the letterboxed format, but in a scanned version that fills the entire video screen. (Letterboxing is a technique whereby a widescreen movie is released on video with a horizontal black strip running across the top and bottom of the TV screen, in order to preserve the original widescreen ratio.)

The advance print of *Ferris Bueller* provided by Paramount to Lyons for his review was letterboxed. But that is not the version that Paramount decided to release nationally. We regret any confusion or misunderstanding this may have caused our readers.

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*Paramount Pictures*

EDDIE MURPHY IS THE CHOSEN ONE.



# THE GOLDEN CHILD

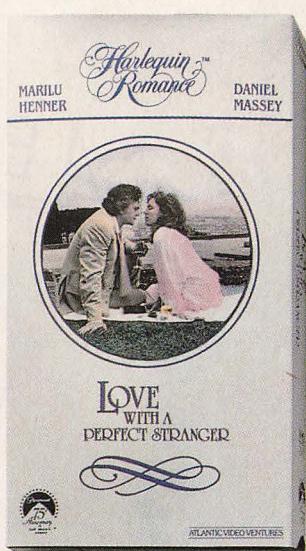
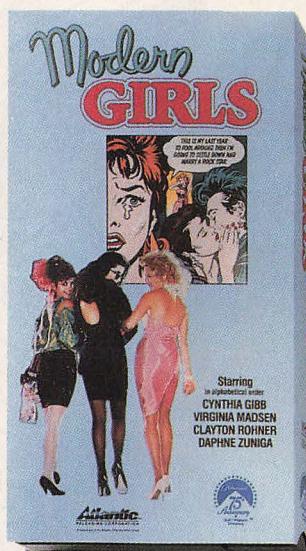
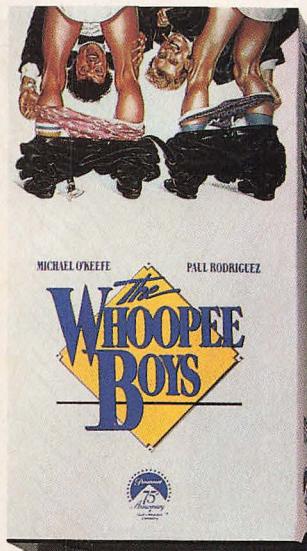
Watch for Eddie Murphy in 'Beverly Hills Cop II'  
coming to theatres on May 20th.

# Presenting Eddie Murphy as the Chosen One. Along with a chosen few.

What's your choice. Romance? Comedy? How about some adventure? You've got a tough decision to make with these five new Paramount releases. Because these new titles make choosing a favorite almost as much fun as watching it.

Of course, if you want to choose everybody's favorite, then the choice is simple: Eddie Murphy in *The Golden Child*.

Murphy turns in a solid-gold comedic performance in a madcap adventure through Tibet. He's on a mission to save "The Golden Child," and he needs a sacred golden dagger to accomplish it. But it's Murphy's wit that turns out to be the sharpest weapon in this 24-carat movie hit. Stereo, closed-captioned, also available on laser videodisc.



Jake (Michael O'Keefe) is no gentleman. But he's in love with a Palm Beach heiress. So when Jake's buddy (Paul Rodriguez) springs his plan to groom him for a high society wedding, it turns into high comedy. **\$79.95**

Warehouse release date July 1.

Get ready for a night full of fun, sex, laughs and rock 'n roll (but not necessarily in that order) as three gorgeous girls set out for a night on the town they'll never forget.

**\$79.95**

In the tradition of the great Harlequin™ romance novels, *Cloud Waltzing* sends your heart soaring as journalist Meredith Tolliver (Kathleen Beller) fights to further her career. In France to interview a reclusive millionaire, she takes herself to new heights to find love and leave her past behind. **\$39.95**

Can you find a perfect love in an imperfect world? That is the question the beautiful Victoria Ducane (Marilu Henner) must answer while vacationing in Italy to escape the tentacles of her fashion empire. This is a Harlequin™ romance you'll always think of as the perfect love story. **\$39.95**



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Paramount Pictures

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ALPHABETICAL ORDER

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# Get your hands on our new releases.

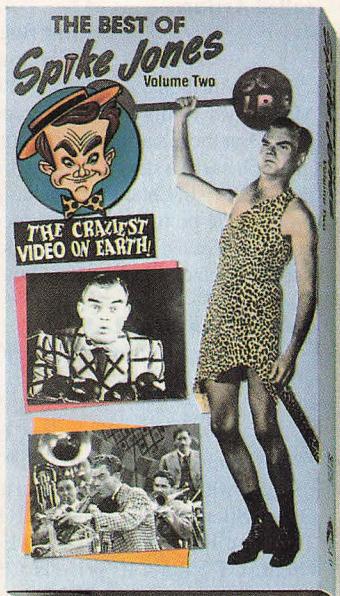
Who could resist this attractive combination? Two great musical comedy shows. And a manic romp with the boys in *The Men's Club*, with impressive performances from seven of Hollywood's hottest leading men including Roy Scheider, Harvey Keitel, Richard Jordan and Treat Williams. Based on the shocking best-selling novel, *The Men's Club* takes you out for the night of your life. Also available on laser videodisc. **\$79.95**

From National Lampoon, the people who brought you *Animal House*, *Lemmings* and *Vacation*, this ruthlessly funny revue of songs, skits and mayhem is the ultimate lampoon of everything we hold sacred. **\$29.95**



The one and only Spike Jones (Boink!) is back (Bang!) with the City Slickers.

Watch as they raise havoc with their zany renditions of some of America's all-time favorite musical standards. And laugh at the antics of Eddy Arnold, Joe Besser and Mimi Benzell as they struggle through Spiked-up guest performances. **\$29.95**



Warehouse release date June 3.



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## In Search Of Cary, Harry, Ava, And Ryan's Kin

### MY FAVORITE WIFE

There have been lists of Cary Grant's movies that are available on cassettes. The one always omitted is also the funniest: *My Favorite Wife*. Is it on tape?

Joan L. Miller  
York, PA

Joanie, Joanie, Joanie: "Nostalgia Merchant (now under the Media Home Entertainment banner) will be rereleasing the 1940 comedy Nov. 25, 1987. At that time the cassette will be available in stores and through distributors."

### ASYLUM

I'm looking for a British horror movie called *Asylum*.

Jim Boeckmann  
Cincinnati, OH

Psycho thriller, *qu'est ce c'est*: "Nostalgia Merchant's rights to *Asylum* recently expired, but there's a chance that some stores may still carry a stray copy or two. It seems now that Prism Entertainment has picked up on the 1972 picture, as it just recently has been rereleased. Have your local shopkeeper contact a Prism distributor."

### HARRY'S WAR

Is the very funny movie *Harry's War* on videocassette?

B. Yarwood  
Ramstien, Germany

The Hunter shares the spoils: "The 1984 comedy, with Edward Herrmann and David Ogden Stiers, can be ordered C.O.D. from Thomson Productions at 1060 E. 800 S., Orem, UT 84058. Its price is \$29.95 plus \$3.50 postage and handling."

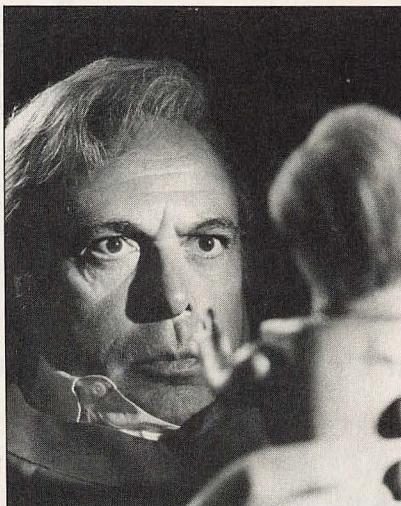
### ONE TOUCH OF VENUS

I have been looking for *One Touch of Venus*, with Ava Gardner. Could you check your sources for me?

Doris Benton  
Cincinnati, OH

We've got the *Touch*: "Sure can, Doris. And my sources reveal that Republic Pictures Home Video put this one out. You can call the company at (213) 306-4040 and

As a service to our readers, *Video Review* will help track down "lost" or hard-to-find tapes or discs. Send requests to **Video Review**, Video Hunter, 902 Broadway, New York, NY 10010. **VR** reserves the right to edit and condense selections for publication. Sorry, no personal replies.



Herbert Lom: All dolled-up in Asylum.

place an order with your charge card, or send \$59.95 (plus \$4.50 shipping) to 12636 Beatrice St., Los Angeles, CA 90066."

### THE AVENGERS

Could you give me information on the whereabouts of cassettes of *The Avengers*?

Kerwin Johnson  
Houston, TX

Avengeance is mine: "Two episodes of the wild British spy series are now available from Video Yesteryear. They are "Dial a Deadly Number" (\$29.95) and "The Girl

### SEVEN DOORS OF DEATH

A couple of years ago I saw a movie called *Seven Doors of Death* and loved it. Is it available on videocassette?

Pat Zimmer  
Barberton, OH

It's behind *Door* number one: "IVE's ThrillerVideo label has released this surprisingly stylish Italian gorefest on tape for \$39.95 (plus postage and handling). Pat, you can call the company at (800) 782-8226 to place an order."

### OH! CALCUTTA!

Can you tell me if the movie *Oh! Calcutta!* is available on videocassette?

Lee Foster  
Lincoln, NE

Bare necessity: "The tape version of this raunchy motion picture, which stars *Maude's* Bill Macy, is available from VidAmerica. Have your video retailer contact its VidAmerica or Lightning Video distributors."

### RYAN'S DAUGHTER

For years I have been looking forward to seeing *Ryan's Daughter* again. Can you help me find the excellent movie on videocassette?

Marianne Mills  
North Pole, AK

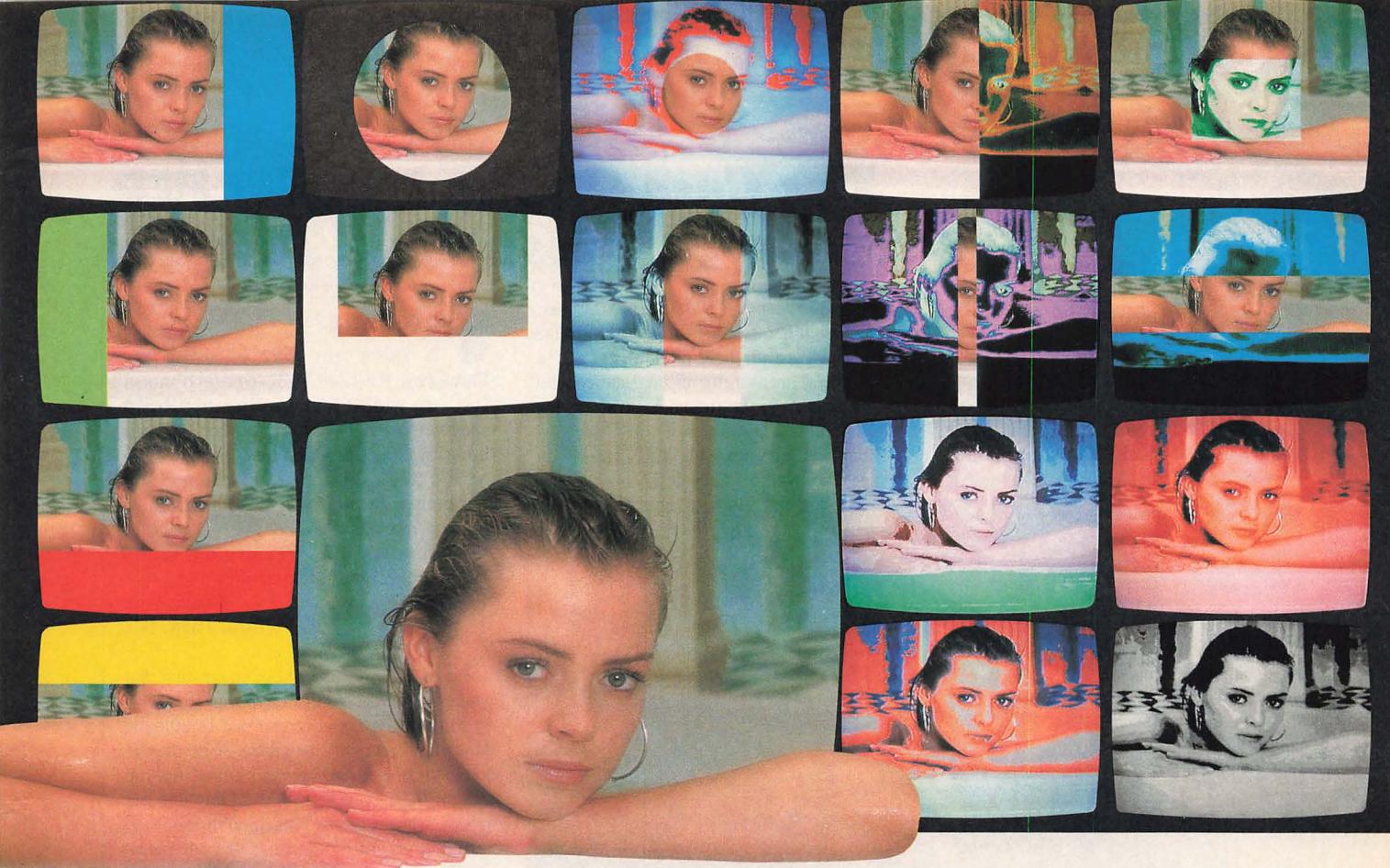
Ryan's hope: "MGM/UA, at 1350 Ave. of the Americas, New York, NY, 10019, has



Ryan's Daughter's Sarah Miles, Trevor Howard and Robert Mitchum.

from *A.U.N.T.I.E.*" (\$24.95). You may order the tapes with a credit card by calling (800) 243-0987."

released the picture on tape. If you can't locate the tape anywhere around North Pole, drop the company a line." □



## For Creative Video Effects That Are Head And Shoulders Above The Rest

State-of-the-art video production is much more than just a variety of **wipes** and **fades**; it's the romantic mood suggested by **Defocus**, the dramatic simplicity of **B/W**, sci-fi scenes courtesy of **Negative**, the ability to **Colorize** for emphasis and to **Paint** normal images into unforgettable ones. It's the JX-W9, and all of the above.

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### SPECIAL EFFECTS GENERATOR JX-W9

THE GOAL IS PERFECTION.



### SPECIAL EFFECTS GENERATOR

## The Case Of The Missing PIP, Connection Queries Plus A Dub Tip

### G.I. DON'T KNOW

**Q** I have a Sony KV2062-AVB TV and a Kenwood KV-905 VCR which I purchased while stationed in Europe. My problem is that I can't figure out how to hook it up so that I can record cable television. I've followed all of the instruc-



*"Ya know, Sarge, I think I finally figured this cable thing out."*

tions included with the equipment, but to no avail. Even my friends can't figure out the problem. Can you suggest something that I haven't tried?

**Sgt. Rick Stein**  
Ft. Carson, CO

**A** Since we don't really know what you've tried, we can only suggest a hookup that should work. Since your KV-905 came cable ready, you should be able to run the line from your cable company directly into the VCR. The line out of your VCR should then run to your KV-2062. Next, look around the control panel for a little switch marked TV-CATV. People often forget to move this into the CATV position.

### DIGITAL DEAD END?

**Q** Are PIP (picture-in-picture) features on the latest digital VCRs and TVs useless to viewers who possess a descrambler/channel-converter system for pay TV? It seems to me that you would only be able to produce a bunch of blank, black boxes on the monitor's screen.

**Larry Maloney**  
Prescott, Ontario

**A** Not necessarily. If you watch a tape on a PIP-equipped VCR that's hooked up to a descrambler/channel converter, for example, you can still generate a second, boxed

image in the corner of the screen. However, since the generation of the second image takes place within the digital TV or VCR's tuner, using the aforementioned setup (with the cable box as the tuner) neutralizes the multichannel PIP effects.

But PIP effects alone should not steer you away from digital VCRs or TVs. As we've

reported (see "Video's Next Dimension," February '87 VR), digital processing promises to improve video images.



*A PIP via the Sears 5352 VCR.*

### WARP FACTORS

**Q** It is true that my Pioneer PR-8210 LaserDisc player may warp my video-discs through normal use?

**Ted Hart**  
Rancho Murieta, CA

**A** If you normally rest your PR-8210 atop the radiator while you use it, maybe. Otherwise, we've heard no such complaint from any LaserDisc player owners.

### RADIO DAZE

**Q** Is there any way of using my Panasonic PV-1340 VCR to record sound from my radio? I have a Hitachi SR-504 receiver with two tape inputs. I tried hooking the audiocassette cables into the VCR's audio in/out jacks, but nothing happened. I want to tape radio's *Howard Stern Show* (see "87 People to Watch in '87," January '87 VR) using my VCR's six-hour recording capability.

**Bruce Pine**  
Floral Park, NY

**A** At first, we thought of suggesting that you ask the FCC scrutinizers who frequently tune in Stern's controversial broadcasts how *they* tape the programs—but they're tough to contact. So, we recommend that you run an RCA cord from one of the tape out (rec) positions on the Hitachi to the audio in terminal on your Panasonic. If your mono VCR only has a single RCA audio-input terminal, you may have to pick up an adapter that will connect the dual (stereo) outputs from the receiver to the VCR's mono input.

### JOHNNY ON THE SPOT

**Q** I read about a "commercial cutter" in the October Buyer's Guide (page 118). I'd like more information on it. Specifically, where can I get one?

**Will H. Horton**  
Detroit, MI

**A** As we mentioned in that issue, "You may come home to find the shower scene from *Psycho* or Gene Kelly's 'Singin' in the Rain' dance inadvertently omitted while the Alpo commercial remains maddeningly intact." Essentially, these machines stand on pretty shaky technological ground. Most of these devices (though, for some suspicious reason, we couldn't find any advertised) sense changes in either the audio or video signal, then activate the pause control. Until someone applies advanced artificial intelligence to the problem, you're better off zapping.

*Selected queries addressed to Video Review, 902 Broadway, New York, NY 10010 are answered in the "Questions" section, space permitting. VR reserves the right to edit and condense selections for publication. Sorry, no personal replies.*

JIM  
HENSON'S

# MUPPET VIDEO



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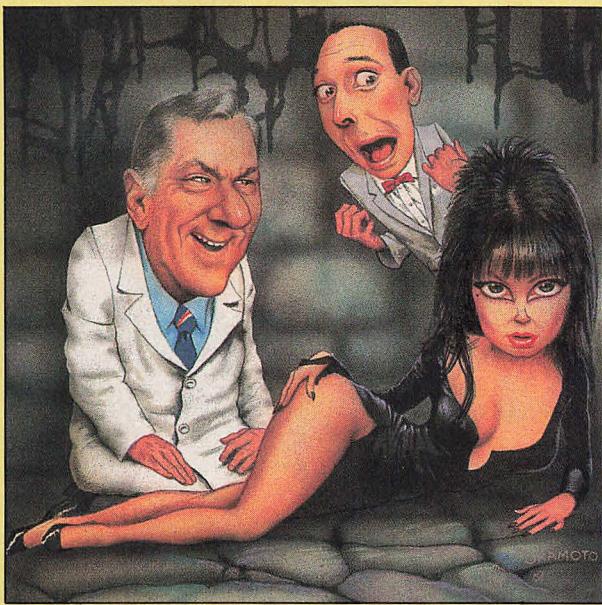


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- ★ Fozzie's Muppet Songbook ★

# Davis Dreams, Elvira Schemes And Sharif Talks Like An Egyptian

## WHY DO YOU THINK THEY CALL IT THE BOOB TUBE?



This one falls into the "it was only a matter of time" category. TV horror hostess Elvira, she of raven tresses and unsinkable cleavage, is going to have a movie of her own. Yes, she'll be replacing Meryl Streep in the motion picture adaptation of William Kennedy's *Ironweed*. No, wait, that's wrong. Elvira's vehicle will be a comedy with supernatural overtones, or so we're told. No title yet, but we're rooting for *Voodoo Chicken*. In any event, aside from being a movie you can go see to have a chuckle, this flick will also serve as the pilot for a possible Elvira sitcom! It's two, two, two media events in one!

Working on the script will be John Paragon, who's crafted some episodes of *Pee-wee's Playhouse*, and Sam Egan, a veteran of *Quincy*. The blood runs cold as one imagines Elvira working up a Klugmanlike sweat and bellowing, "She didn't die of anemia! Look at the marks on her neck! Magic Screen, gimme a readout!"

Trash fans will note that the Elvira movie does not constitute the screen debut of Cassandra Peterson (that's what Elvira calls herself when she's at home). In the mid-'70s, when she had human hair and manageable fingernails, Peterson appeared in a dumb sexploitation pic called *Working Girls*, in which she danced topless and read lines. Talk about a woman who's come a long way. These days, she doesn't dance.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

During the pre-Easter season of Lent, Roman Catholics try to sacrifice some staple of their daily routine. Surely you've read about it. This usually translates into light fasting or temperance, rather than draconian abstinence

from air, food or water. In northern Italy, however, Bishop Gilberto Baroni opened the '87 season by circulating a pastoral letter suggesting that this year "the 40-day fast can also be done by renouncing television."

Meanwhile, at a press conference in Washington, DC, Home

Satellite Services founder David Wolford defined television as "a basic need," and not a luxury. Concerned as he is for people's needs, Wolford started HSS to deliver packages of scrambled cable TV programming to satellite dish owners.

We can draw three obvious conclusions from this:

1. Avoid investing in Italian satellite companies.
2. Grab a bite to eat *before* attending a dinner party at the Wolfords.
3. Cigarette smoking can frequently lead to heroin addiction.

## OH, MS. SANDMAN

*Hypnotic Places, Exotic Spaces*, the latest in new-age music videos from Carol Scott Davis, opens with a caressing shot of a long-limbed beauty with platinum blond hair languishing before an opulent fireplace. One's first reaction might be: "Yeehah—when does the fun begin?" But Davis and her fellow creators at Wallpaper Videos Ltd. in Omaha, NE, programmed a



far more sedate half-hour of audio/visuals than this initial scene suggests.

Davis uses the siren in white satin to bind the tape's four lyrical segments together; these are *her* dreams. Together, they aim for the viewer to "relax... and enjoy the fantasy of hypnotic places and exotic spaces." Your eyelids feel very heavy now. You feel sleepy, very sleepy. . . .

## STARSPOT: OMAR SHARIF

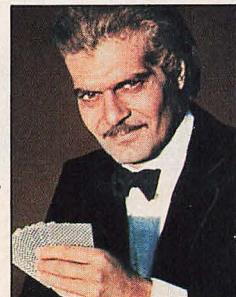
Lunching with an international star of Omar Sharif's reputation could be a most humbling experience, were he any less gracious than the *bons vivants* he typically portrays on screen. In fact, when VR met with the star of *Funny Girl*, *Dr. Zhivago* and *Lawrence of Arabia* to discuss home video and his recently released tape, *Play Bridge with Omar Sharif* (Best Film and Video), we found him both smoothly cool and warmly open.

**VR:** So, what's all this bridge business?

**SHARIF:** Well, bridge is a passion of mine. It's my hobby. Peo-

ple sometimes make too much of it in relation to myself because I'm associated with it. Take people who play golf, for example.

They're crazy about golf. If they had a bad round in the morning, you can't talk to them all day. **VR:** What led you to involve yourself with this video?



**SHARIF:** Video, now, is the most extraordinary thing in the whole world. I think that video and bridge, or video and chess, or video and games in general, have to be associated. Young people today are more involved with video than they are with anything else. They watch video, they buy video, they

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# **Video Review**

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play videogames—the future is video. In this country, there are progressively fewer young people coming to bridge tournaments than ever before. I think that to spread it more, you have to go through video.

**VR:** How does your video teach people to play bridge?

**SHARIF:** By helping them participate, and making them play with me. This first tape is for the average players. They bid the hand with me, play the hand with me. As they watch the video, they can stop it—play this card, see that it doesn't work—and then go back and play another card.

**VR:** Malcolm-Jamal Warner recently released a tape for teens on how to be cool. Have you given any thought to preparing a similar guide to European charm?

**SHARIF:** No, I don't do things like that. I think that if you do something like that, it must also be useful. I don't think that European charm would be useful to a young person growing up today. People have to live for their own time.

**VR:** How does home video affect your relationship with the movies?

**SHARIF:** I watch a lot of movies on video because I can't go to the theaters. I don't like to go to the movies and go through the hassle of people recognizing me, crowding around me and all that.

**VR:** As an actor, do you try to keep up with all the latest movies?

**SHARIF:** No. I don't do things for a purpose. One day, I wake up and I want to see a picture—I do it. There are no rules in my life.

**VR:** What movies do you watch?

**SHARIF:** I like old movies. And it's not only the movies, I like the stars of the old days. I enjoy watching Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Clark Gable, Jimmy Stewart, James Cagney and all these people. They're irreplaceable today. With due respect to all the wonderful actors that you have around today, they just cannot compare. So many of them are like people you meet on the street—which is a great compliment to their art—but [when I watch a movie] I don't want to see people that I meet on the street. I want to see wonderful people.

**VR:** But don't you see that changing as more older people push for mature movies to watch?

**SHARIF:** Yes, but the great directors don't make those pictures. They're still interested in making movies for theaters. There is a

talented new crop of directors and technicians working on TV miniseries and the like. I've been taking character roles there.

**VR:** Does playing character roles satisfy you as much as playing lead roles did earlier in your career?

**SHARIF:** I have to make a living from my profession. It's the only one I've got. You're not at liberty, at my age, to walk into a studio and say, "I want to play this." So I enjoy playing character parts now. There's also a cowardly side to it: If the movie doesn't do well, it's the fault of the young leads.

### MOP-TOP REDO

You've probably wondered what all those singers from silly English pop bands slip into the VCR when they want to kick back and watch a little tube. Fine, we never gave it a moment's thought either, but an answer to that very question appeared in our mailbox the other morning.

They call it *HOT*, short for *Helen Oppenheim's Trends*, the international hair videomagazine. Most bigwigs in the do circles disdain national boundaries, so Oppenheim hunts the world over to find the *hot* coifs years before anyone else even thinks of them.

*HOT* distributes the tape through the Salon Video Network on 24th Street in New York City. According to its press agent, *HOT* aims to sell its one-hour production to many, if not all, of



the "64 million US beauty salons." That's a beauty parlor for every 3.8 people in America. Talk about unserved markets!

The accompanying photo depicts the 10-year-old son of London hairstylists Maureen and Kevin Bura. "We wanted to create a rag doll," Maureen Bura explains. Someone should tell the Buras about *Toys 'R' Us*.



**By Laurie Werner**

Like a number of her colleagues—serious actors in their 20s and 30s—**Karen Allen** vacillates between theater and movies. She's vacillated pretty nicely, too. Among her movies are one of the highest grossers of all time, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Paramount), one of the most raucous and successful comedies ever, *Animal House* (MCA), and one of the sweetest hits of recent years, *Starman* (RCA/Columbia).

Even with such an enviable track record, she sounds as though she prefers the stage. We spoke to her in New York while she was preparing for her performance as Helen Keller's teacher, Ann Sullivan, in *The Miracle Worker*, which won raves.

Why did Allen take to the stage? "In film," she says, "you don't really have any time to prepare. You may meet the actor you're playing the scene with five or 10 minutes before you shoot. And you work in isolation, not with a group like you do onstage. And you do get typecast. If you're young, you play a young character. And if you do it well, they want you to play it over and over."

She also has been a bit unlucky on movie locations. Take the production of *A Small Circle of Friends* (CBS/Fox). Right after the cast and crew moved into their Boston hotel, they were awakened by a fire. Several crew members had to hurl themselves out of windows to survive. "It was nightmarish," Allen says quietly.

Once the filming started, the crew was ejected from the Harvard campus main set for putting fake snow on the ground and restaging an anti-Vietnam rally. When an irate professor knocked over the camera, the cast and crew knew it was time to leave.

Allen hasn't given up on movies entirely, though. In fact, she has three due for release. In one, *Backfire*, she plays an "evil, manipulative woman with plans to murder her husband." In another, a futuristic fantasy called *The End of the Line*, she plays "a figment of a child's imagination, a truck driver named Gus." The last is decidedly more conventional: a movie version of Tennessee Williams' classic *The Glass Menagerie*, co-starring **Joanne Woodward** and directed by **Paul Newman**. It was particularly satisfying, Allen says, because she and Woodward also performed the play onstage.

★ ★ ★

**Short Takes:** One movie, currently in development, that we'd like to see is *The Lemon Sisters*. It's to star **Diane Keaton**, **Carol Kane** and **Katherine Grody** as a singing trio performing in an Atlantic City lounge. . . . One movie we really don't want to see is *Donor*, in which **Yoko Ono** seems set to make her acting debut as a wife who wins the prize of her choice on a Japanese game show, and chooses a heart transplant operation for her ailing husband. . . . Ditto, a TV series: *The Alaska Project*, in which **John Denver** plays a circuit court judge in Alaska. Far out! . . . Apparently out to show **Shelley Long** that she's not the only *Cheers* cast member who can pull off a movie career, **Ted Danson** will try to forget *A Fine Mess* (RCA/Columbia) with two new projects: *One Fine Day*, about a man caught in a time warp, and *The King and Queen of Moonlight Bay*, a father-daughter relationship picture. . . . Once he finishes taking on Wall Street in his next movie, **Oliver Stone** may make a sequel to *Salvador* (Vestron), again with **James Woods**. Whether he will allow *Platoon* (Vestron) to become a TV series is doubtful.





# Hot Hits

VIDEO REVIEW'S GUIDE TO THE  
TOP TAPES AND DISCS



This Month	GENERAL INTEREST	Last Month
1	<b>TOP GUN</b> Tom Cruise, Kelly McGillis; Paramount, \$26.95	1
2	<b>LEGAL EAGLES</b> Robert Redford, Debra Winger; MCA, \$89.95	—
3	<b>FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF</b> Matthew Broderick, Mia Sara; Paramount, \$79.95	—
4	<b>SOUL MAN</b> C. Thomas Howell, Rae Dawn Chong; New World, \$79.95	—
5	<b>STAND BY ME</b> Wil Wheaton, River Phoenix; RCA/Columbia, \$89.95	7
6	<b>THE FLY</b> Jeff Goldblum, Geena Davis; CBS/Fox, \$89.98	6
7	<b>ALIENS</b> Sigourney Weaver, Paul Reiser; CBS/Fox, \$89.98	2
8	<b>BACK TO SCHOOL</b> Rodney Dangerfield, Sally Kellerman; HBO/Cannon, \$79.95	3
9	<b>RUTHLESS PEOPLE</b> Bette Midler, Danny DeVito; Touchstone, \$79.95	4
10	<b>THE KARATE KID PART II</b> Ralph Macchio, Pat Morita; RCA/Columbia, \$79.95	5

This Month	FAMILY VIEWING™	Last Month
1	<b>STAR WARS</b> Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford; CBS/Fox, \$29.98	—
2	<b>PINOCCHIO</b> Animated feature; Walt Disney, \$29.95	—
3	<b>HELP!</b> The Beatles; MPI, \$69.95	8
4	<b>THE KARATE KID PART II</b> Ralph Macchio, Pat Morita; RCA/Columbia, \$79.95	2
5	<b>LABYRINTH</b> David Bowie; Embassy, \$79.95	1
6	<b>THE SOUND OF MUSIC</b> Julie Andrews, Christopher Plummer; CBS/Fox, \$29.98	—
7	<b>FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR</b> Joey Cramer; Walt Disney, \$79.95	3
8	<b>SHATTERED</b> Burt Reynolds, Judd Nelson; MCA, \$24.95	—
9	<b>THE BOY WHO COULD FLY</b> Jay Underwood; Karl-Lorimar, \$79.95	9
10	<b>MY FAIR LADY</b> Rex Harrison, Audrey Hepburn; CBS/Fox, \$29.98	—

This Month	TOP DISCS	Last Month
1	<b>TOP GUN</b> Tom Cruise, Kelly McGillis; Paramount LV, \$29.95	—
2	<b>RUTHLESS PEOPLE</b> Danny DeVito, Bette Midler; Touchstone LV, \$34.95	—
3	<b>THE KARATE KID PART II</b> Ralph Macchio, Pat Morita; RCA/Columbia LV, \$39.95	1
4	<b>INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM</b> Harrison Ford, Kate Capshaw; Paramount LV, \$29.95	2
5	<b>SLEEPING BEAUTY</b> Animated feature; Walt Disney LV, \$34.95	3
6	<b>DOWN AND OUT IN BEVERLY HILLS</b> Richard Dreyfuss, Bette Midler; Touchstone LV, \$34.95	—
7	<b>LABYRINTH</b> David Bowie; Embassy LV, \$34.95	4
8	<b>PINOCCHIO</b> Animated feature; Walt Disney LV, \$34.95	—
9	<b>POLTERGEIST II: THE OTHER SIDE</b> Craig T. Nelson, JoBeth Williams; MGM/UA LV, \$34.95	5
10	<b>RAN</b> Tatsuya Nakadai; CBS/Fox LV, \$34.98	—

This Month	HOME OFFICE™
1	<b>LIVING LANGUAGE SPANISH LESSONS</b> Karl-Lorimar, \$29.95
2	<b>CAREER STRATEGIES 1</b> Esquire, \$29.95
3	<b>CONSUMER REPORTS: HOW TO BUY A HOUSE . . .</b> Karl-Lorimar, \$19.95
4	<b>HOW TO USE YOUR IBM PC IN TEN EASY LESSONS</b> Kennon, \$79.95
5	<b>LIVING LANGUAGE FRENCH LESSONS</b> Karl-Lorimar, \$29.95

This Month	KID VID
1	<b>TEDDY RUXPIN: ESCAPE FROM THE TREACHEROUS MTS.</b> Hi-Tops, \$12.95
2	<b>SLEEPING BEAUTY</b> Walt Disney, \$29.95
3	<b>TEDDY RUXPIN: TREASURE OF THE GRUNDO</b> Hi-Tops, \$12.95
4	<b>TRANSFORMERS: THE MOVIE</b> FHE, \$79.95
5	<b>CHARLOTTE'S WEB</b> Paramount, \$19.95

"Top 10 Hits" are based on a nationwide survey of leading video software specialty stores, chains, mass merchandisers and wholesalers. The lists include titles culled from retailers' current top tape and disc lists as well as distributors' prerelease sales printouts.

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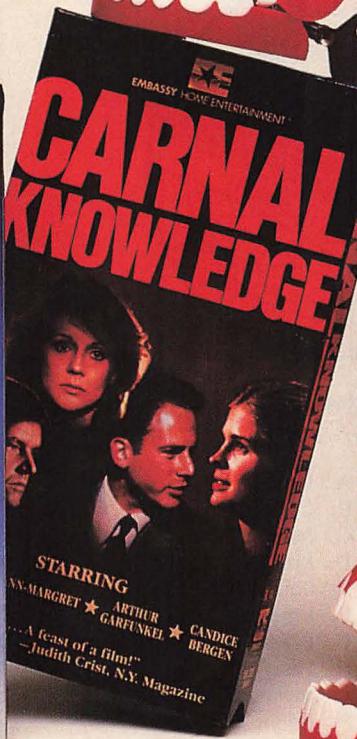
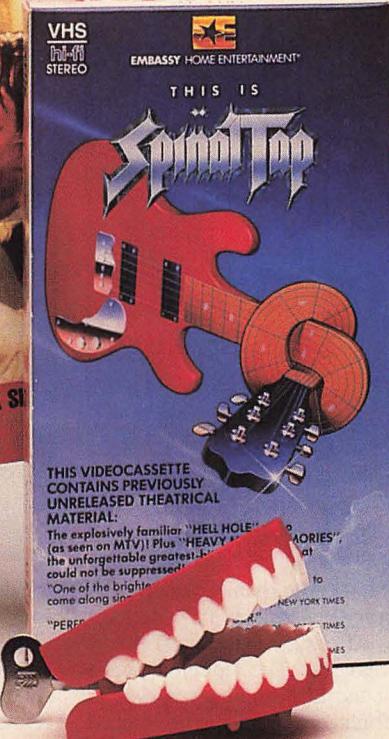
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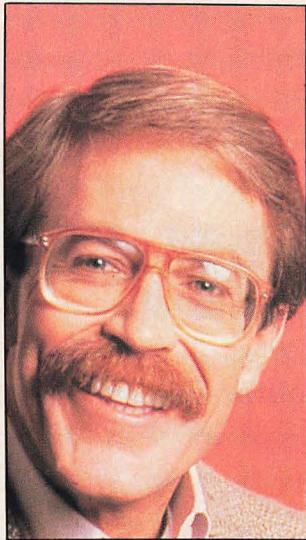
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## ASK MR. VIDEO

Dear Mr. Video: My friend insists that Shirley MacLaine used to be a man. Well?

—Transient in Toronto

Dear Trans: No, never a man, but she did spend some time as an Air Force C-130 cargo plane.



Dear Mr. Video: Does that Bill Harris guy ever trim his mustache?

—Skeev in Wisconsin

Dear Skeev: Actually, Mr. Harris controls all of his hair with a small knob at the base of his back.

Dear Mr. Video: What's a horizontal line of resolution?

—Counting in Cortland

Dear Cort: "I think I'll just lie in bed today."

### I THINK IT'S SOMETHING WITH THE CARBONATOR

For years, starving students in need of wheels drove easily self-serviced Volkswagen Bugs. A publication proudly titled the *Idiot's Book* saved many mechanically inept VW owners from the financial crunch of garage larceny.

McGraw-Hill just expanded the idea beyond print and released *Auto Repair for Dummies*, a humorous how-to hosted by consumer expert Deanna Sclar and comedian Rich Hall. With Hall on the screen, you might expect segments describing "what to do when you get a rubber chicken stuck in your fan belt."

No such chance. The tape serves more as an introduction to automotive basics than as a step-by-step guide to transmission overhauls. Sclar and Hall discuss checkups, tuneups, oil, waxing and jump-starting. Our favorite part is the section on tire changing. "First," the tape tells us, "you stop the car." Oh.



The name of the game is names that aren't the same. Match the name in Column A with the relative in Column B.

#### A

1. Warren Beatty
2. Mary Martin
3. Martin Sheen
4. Peter Graves
5. Anne Baxter
6. Helen Hayes
7. Tippi Hedren
8. Joel Grey
9. Arlene Dahl
10. Debbie Reynolds

#### B

- A. James Arness
- B. Carrie Fisher
- C. James MacArthur
- D. Mickey Katz
- E. Shirley MacLaine
- F. Lorenzo Lamas
- G. Frank Lloyd Wright
- H. Larry Hagman
- I. Melanie Griffith
- J. Emilio Estevez

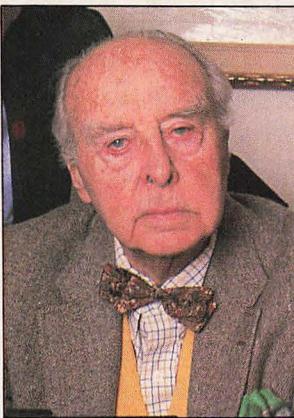
Answers: 1. E, sister 2. H, son 3. J, son 4. A, brother 5. G, grandfather 6. C, son 7. I, daughter 8. D, father 9. F, son 10. B, daughter

## WOULD YOU BUY A USED RIGOLETTO FROM THIS MAN?

Upscale hucksterism finally hits the home video market. Kultur, the performing-arts video distributor with a capital "K," recently hired John Houseman, who embodies class (also with a capital "K"), to act as its official spokesman. Welcome to home video, Professor Kingsfield.

Imagine His Pompousness walking across an ornate living room to intone: "Placido Domingo sings *Otello*—the old-fashioned way."

All kidding aside, if Houseman's duties at Kultur leave him



any spare time, he would be the perfect spokesman for those controversial prophylactic commercials. "I don't know what you do with your *spare* time, nor do I particularly *caare*. But I must warn you about one thing. . . ."

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Las Vegas superstar and *Hollywood Squares* host John Davidson recently made this earthshattering declaration on *The Tonight Show*:

"Nothing is deader than videogames right now."

Keep an eye out for Generalissimo Francisco Franco in that center square. ■

### FOLLOW THE BOUNCING BALL

In *The Second Hundred Years* (ABC-TV, '67-'68 season), Monte Markham woke up from a cryogenic sleep of 67 years and tried to adjust to the world's many changes. The opening scene found him rubbing his eyes in frightened wonder as he watched

a gunfight on television. "There's men in that little box," he gasped.

Well old man, now the little men sit in *front* of the set—and they talk directly to *you*. Fortunately, they engage you in educational competition rather than try to plug you with a snub-nosed .38.

This miracle of video-age interactivity occurs when the two little Video Voyagers kids from Select Merchandise Inc. arrive in your parlor. This toy system (\$69.99) includes the space tots, a plastic vehicle/keyboard and a videotape that they interact with. When the tape plays, it sends signals (through a wire) that activate the Voyagers' mouths. Kids respond to their questions by pressing buttons on the keypad. With additional tapes and keyboard overlays, Select's marketers feel that the Voyagers will appeal to different age groups.

But, would it appeal to Monte Markham's aforementioned 120-year-old man? Or, for that matter, the founding fathers? Maybe we should try it out on their moral equivalents. And you thought G.I. Joe with "lifelike hair" was a breakthrough.

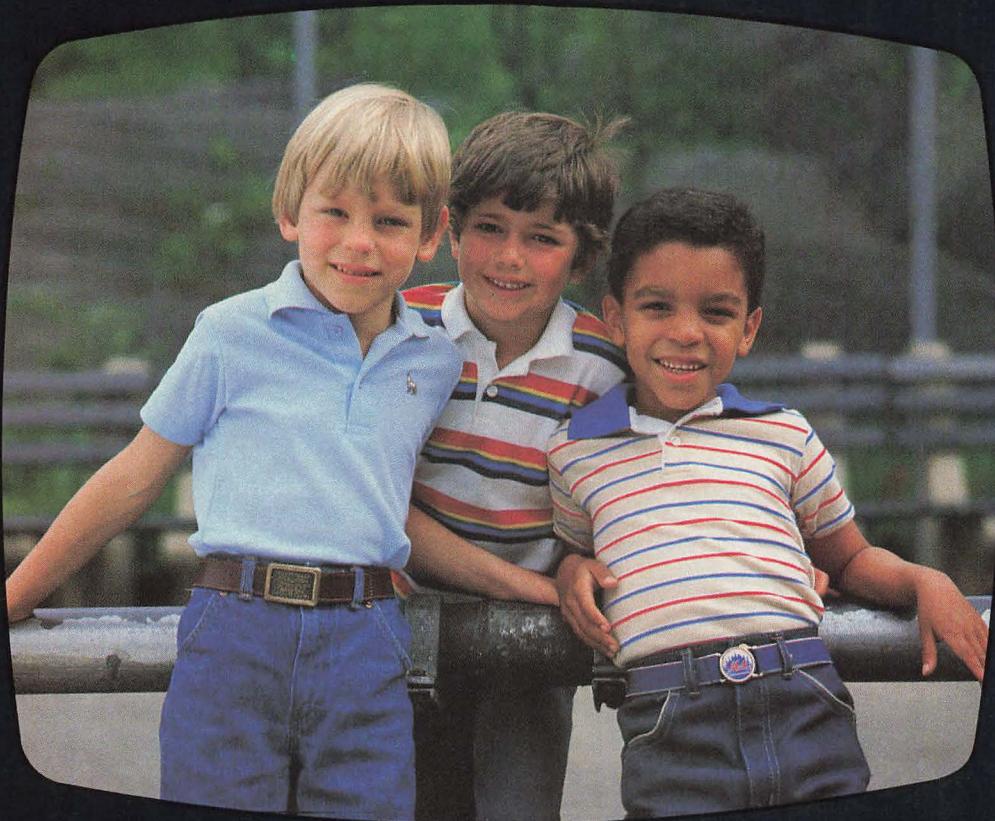
### IT'S HERE

Oh boy! The folks at United Home Video in Tulsa, OK (where the wind . . .), read our



minds from over 2,000 miles away. They just shipped *Deep Cranking: The Kneel 'N Reel Fishing Method* to stores across America. Those gilled, aquatic vertebrates better watch out now.

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The SD-P40 uses 7-inch projection CRTs and 160mm power lenses, the largest ever built for home use. Together they achieve over 300 foot-lamberts of brightness—brightness further enhanced by a first-of-its-kind, highly efficient, direct-coupled liquid lens and liquid cooling system. It utilizes a larger radiator and a unique pressure control valve to maintain cooler operating temperatures and longer life.

Special multi-coated lenses and a carefully-designed optical path reduce internal reflections and ghosting. The benefit—contrast so superior it surpasses that of any other projection system.

The SD-P40 is the only set of any kind to hold focus right to the corners of the screen—because only Pioneer utilizes a Dynamic Focus Circuit that adjusts the focal length of the electron beam as it scans every point on the flat CRT face. And there's a new High Voltage Stabilizer Circuit that all but eliminates "blooming"—that annoying fuzziness ordinarily seen around white lettering and objects at high brightness levels.

Each of the SD-P40's three projection tubes

has its own Velocity Modulation Circuit for sharper focus and less bloom. One of the SD-P40's more remarkable benefits is its wide viewing field. Even when viewed from off-center, the picture is bright

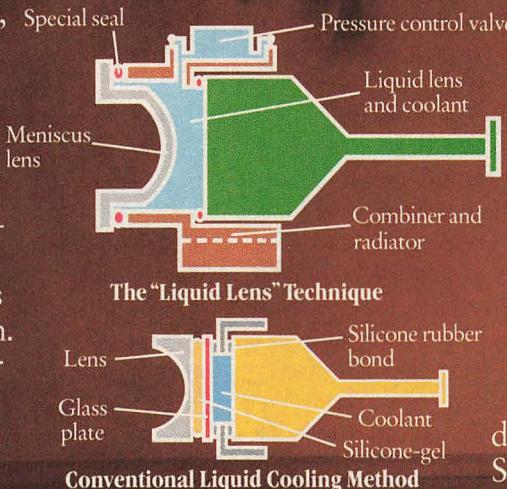
and clear with none of the annoying color shift so noticeable on other projection systems. This "wall-to-wall" chromatic accuracy is made possible by the SD-P40's unique double-sided lenticular screen. The front lenticular screen also disperses ambient

room light to eliminate glare, and enhance contrast.

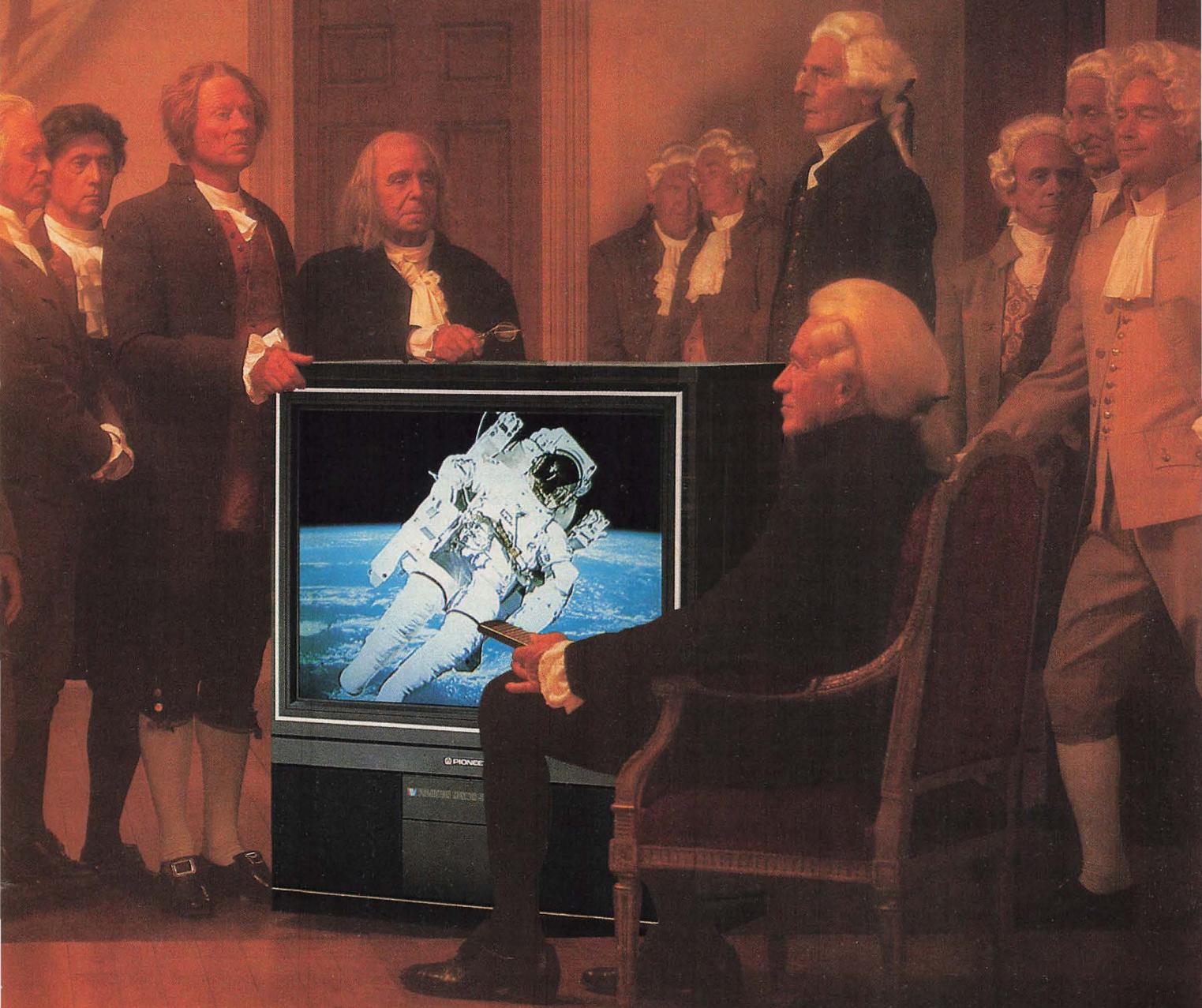
The Pioneer SD-P40 is fully equipped with all the latest accommodations for television of today and the future. The 139-channel cable-capable tuner includes an MTS decoder for Broadcast Stereo Television and Second Audio Programs.

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Perhaps we should close by saying that words can never do justice to the SD-P40's revolutionary picture. And if you really want to see the best and the brightest big picture ever made, you have to see your Pioneer Dealer first. For more information, call 1-800-421-1404.



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# Attack On Home Taping Could Clear Congress Soon



Hot romance: Video buyers fall in love with *Top Gun*.

## TOP GUN BREAKS SALES BARRIER

By Seth Goldstein

*Top Gun*, the high-flying box-office blockbuster, has now broken all the records in video-cassette sales. At presstime, almost three million copies of the Paramount Home Video cassette were in circulation. That's twice the number of Paramount's *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, the previous video-cassette record holder.

The cassette's low \$26.95 price helped boost the numbers by making this a tape many consumers have decided to buy instead of rent. The high sales numbers also showed that the one-minute Diet Pepsi commercial included in the release didn't scare off many buyers. In fact, it

may have attracted more by helping Paramount release the movie at an affordable price. Mass merchants also boosted the *Top Gun* fever by slashing the price down to \$19.95 and below.

The huge sales numbers of *Top Gun* are forcing Paramount to rethink its strategy for other upcoming hits. *Crocodile Dundee*, originally slated for May release at \$79.95, may now get the low-price treatment late in '87 instead. Oscar winner *Children of a Lesser God* has moved into the May slot instead. Paramount is also juggling dates and prices for *Star Trek IV* and *The Golden Child*. Not a bad lineup for the video label that should finish the current year number one on the video hits parade.

composition to 8mm videotapes—loaded into Beta shells.

The new tapes won't play or record on today's Beta VCRs. The new ED Beta decks, however, will be able to play and record ordinary Beta cassettes. (An identification hole will distinguish the new cassettes from ordinary Beta tapes.)

Sony says the ED Beta decks will go on sale in Japan this fall at a price slightly above today's Beta models. Plans for selling ED Beta decks here are up in the air. (J.B.M.)

## BETTER BETA

"We're not getting older, we're getting Beta," seems to be Sony's answer to the new high-resolution Super VHS system recently announced by JVC. Sony will respond to S-VHS with its own superformat dubbed ED Beta—ED for "extended definition."

Sony claims the new system will boast 500 lines of horizontal resolution, compared with 430 lines claimed for S-VHS. Sony achieves the boost by using metal-particle tape—similar in

## ANTICOPY BILL MAKES GAINS

By James B. Meigs

The legislative effort to limit the home recording capability of digital audiotape (DAT) recorders made dramatic progress in Congress in late March. The House Commerce Committee voted to include in an omnibus trade bill (HR-3) a one-year ban on DAT recorders that don't include anticopy circuitry. Critics of the legislation say that the anticopy requirement could be the first step in a move to limit all types of home recording, including video.

The House committee approved the measure after one hour of debate, without public hearings. The bill would require that all DAT recorders sold in this country include a special chip that could detect a code inserted in some copyrighted music and stop the recording process when the code is present. The US recording industry has been seeking the measure as protection from the losses it says it would suffer from people making high-quality digital copies.

Opponents of the measure, in-

cluding consumer groups and electronics manufacturers, described the vote as a major setback for home recording rights. Some manufacturers have also indicated that if the DAT bill passes they won't introduce the recorders in this country at all.

Supporters say the measure is a necessary step to protect American copyright holders from the losses inflicted by users of the Japanese technology. "It seems a very strange notion that consumers should be allowed the right to steal," said amendment sponsor Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA).

At an April 2 joint hearing of

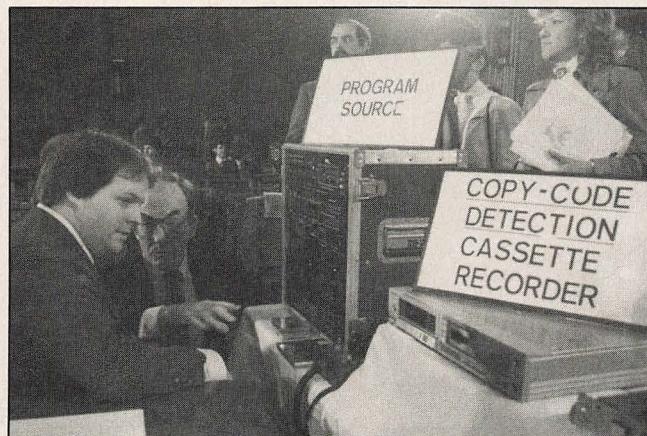
Senate and House subcommittees, debate focused on possible side effects of the anticopy chip.

Testifying for the Electronic Industries Association, audio consultant (and VR technical editor)

Len Feldman maintained that the proposed copy code would cause noticeable distortion.

The copy-code system works by taking a narrow "notch" out of the musical signal at a point (approximately 4,000 Hz) corresponding to the high B and A-sharp keys on a piano. In a tape simulating the effect, played for members of Congress, the distortion was clearly audible.

Engineer David Stebbings, who directs the CBS group that developed the copy-code tech-



Anticopy system for DAT demonstrated to Congress.

nology, responded that the demonstration was "crude." He maintained that the copy-code system would be completely undetectable to listeners. However, he declined to provide technical details concerning the configuration of the chip.

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## LEGAL FIGHT HOLDS UP PLATOON

The jungle warfare that highlights the Oscar-winning *Platoon* is nothing compared to the legal firefights now raging over the movie in court. Video label Vestron, which helped bankroll the movie and hoped to release it by late summer or early fall, is now battling over the picture with producer Hemdale

would expect: money. Hemdale wants more of it for *Platoon* and Academy Award nominee *Hoosiers* than Vestron agreed to pay when it originally invested in the pictures. Now Hemdale wants to keep the high-grossing movies, either to auction them off to the highest bidder or to release under its own name. (Legal papers in the case reveal the existence of a "Hemdale Video.")

The dispute hinges on very different readings of the contract between Hemdale and Vestron. Vestron is attempting to force Hemdale to deliver the movie masters and other materials it says were due a month after the theatrical release. Hemdale counters that Vestron was supposed to start paying its royalty advances of \$4.7 million and \$2.4 million (for *Platoon* and *Hoosiers*, respectively) immediately after the movies opened. It concludes that Vestron is now in "material breach" of the contract—in other words, no deal.

For consumers it adds up to a raw deal. There's no telling when the movies will hit stores until the dispute is settled. (S.G.)



Platoon caught in crossfire.

Films. The fight could delay *Platoon*'s release until '88.

The fight is over just what you



Top decks: RCA still first in poll.

## RCA: AMERICA'S FAVORITE VCR

By Robert Gerson

RCA remains the most popular VCR brand in the US, just as it has ever since VCRs emerged as a mainstream product, says a recent annual survey of VCR-brand popularity.

The company also ranked first in camcorder popularity, according to the survey, conducted by the industry newsletter *Television Digest*, and covering the year 1986.

The top three positions in the ranking remained unchanged, with Panasonic and Fisher taking second and third places. However,

each company had a smaller share of the total market than in years past, probably due to the proliferation of new VCR brands. The survey uncovered a total of 60 VCR brands, up from 45 in last year's count.

Here are the Top 10:

1. RCA
2. Panasonic
3. Fisher
4. Sears
5. GE
6. Sharp
7. Sanyo
8. Magnavox
9. Mitsubishi
10. Zenith

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## VR SALUTES YEAR'S BEST PROGRAMS

It was home video's version of the Academy Awards. When *Video Review* presented ViRA statuettes to 1987 Critics' Choice Award winners, celebrities rubbed elbows with industry executives and *VR*'s top tape and disc reviewers. The festivities, held at New York's posh Lotos Club, were hosted by *VR* contributor and *Entertainment Tonight* regular Leonard Maltin. ViRAs were given to the 25 top programs of the year, as announced in our April issue. We take you now to New York . . .



Actress Lynn Redgrave, host of Best How-To tape (Vestron), is all smiles for ViRA.



Above, columnist Meg Whitcomb with vid mogul Arthur Morowitz. Left, VR publisher Richard Ekstract.



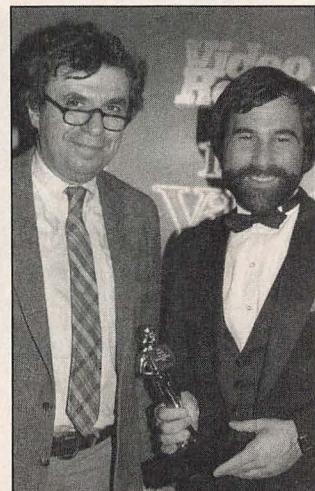
At right, TWICE editor Seth Goldstein with Vestron's John Peisinger. Below, Redgrave chats with host Leonard Maltin and sports-filmmaker Bud Greenspan.



Winners all: HBO's Frank O'Connell, Paramount's Tim Clott, VR critic Andrew Sarris, MCA's Chet Furmanek and CBS/Fox's Bob DeLellis. The industry leaders accepted ViRAs for *F/X*, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, *Back to the Future* and *Aliens*.



Critic Neal Gabler presents award to Disney's Dale Kent.



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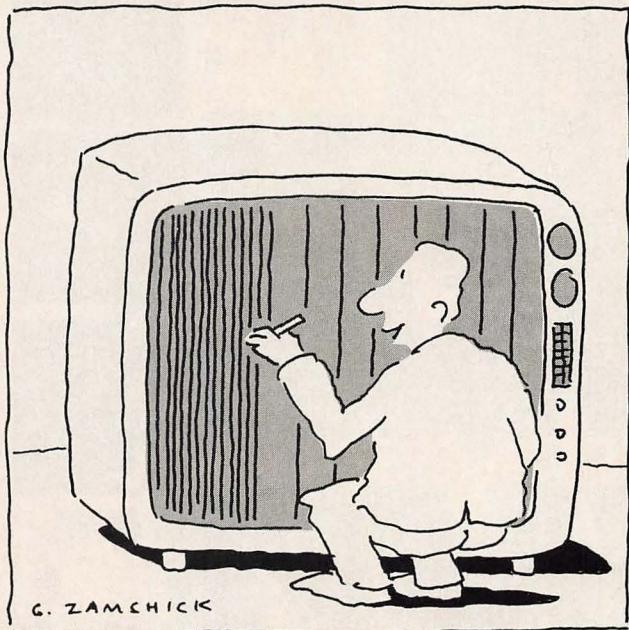
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## Battle Of The Bands: ED Beta Takes On Super VHS

Sony may be willing to concede that its Beta format has lost the home VCR popularity war to JVC's VHS, but there's no way it will voluntarily give up Beta's quality leadership position. So in answer to JVC's recently announced Super-VHS system, Sony has come up with ED (extended definition) Beta, a revamped Beta format that the company claims will deliver the sharpest picture yet.

Due for introduction in Japan this fall, and possibly in the US by the end of the year, ED Beta VCRs use ultra high-band luminance recording and metal-particle tape to record and



play back images with 500 lines of horizontal resolution. That's double what's available from standard VCRs, and a 16 percent improvement over the 430 lines of S-VHS.

ED Beta provides a 1.8 MHz bandwidth for luminance channel recording, against 1.6 MHz for S-VHS, and puts the bandwidth in the 6.8 to 8.6 MHz range, slightly above the 5.4 to 7 MHz used by S-VHS. Like Sony's previous improved formats—Super Beta and the more recent Super Hi-Band Beta (SHB)—ED Beta has reverse compatibility in that it will play tapes recorded in any Beta format, but earlier Beta machines can't fully reproduce tapes made in ED Beta.

Sony says its experience making metal tape for 8mm video has given it the technical capability needed to develop the high-density tape and special sendust recording heads needed for half-inch Beta VCRs. The metal tape cassettes will have a special recognition notch which automatically puts the VCRs into the ED record/play mode. When standard oxide cassettes are used, the VCRs record in the SHB mode. ED Beta uses standard longitudinal mono and Beta Hi-Fi audio recording formats, and Sony claims that its metal tape provides an improvement in longitudinal audio performance.

Like the standard for S-VHS, the ED Beta standard calls for separate luminance and chrominance inputs and outputs that can be used with source or display hardware equipped for such signal splitting. Presently, only pro video and some computer equipment come with such separation, but that's changing. In Japan, JVC says it's introducing high-resolution (560-line) color TVs equipped with a terminal for separate chrominance and luminance inputs, and Sony indicates it will have similarly equipped direct-view and projection TVs soon.

All the innovation in video isn't coming solely in tape. In what was its last hurrah before being donated by GE to the independent research organization SRI International, RCA Labs' David Sarnoff Research Center announced the development of a computerized band-compression technology that allows for the recording of an hour of full-motion video on a standard 4 1/2-inch optical compact disc.

At the heart of RCA's DVI (digital video interactive) system are a pair of very large-scale integrated circuits it calls video display processors (VDPs). One VDP is the picture element, or pixel, processor. It is a preprogrammed device that can handle up to 12.5 million instructions per second. The other VDP is an output display processor, which controls resolution, and can deliver a picture consisting of 256 to 768 lines of horizontal resolution and up to 512 lines of vertical resolution. It also controls color.

To achieve its long recording time, DVI uses computer processing to sharply reduce the amount of information that must be stored. Only the differences in successive TV frames are recorded, and, again through computer processing, the omitted information is restored during playback.

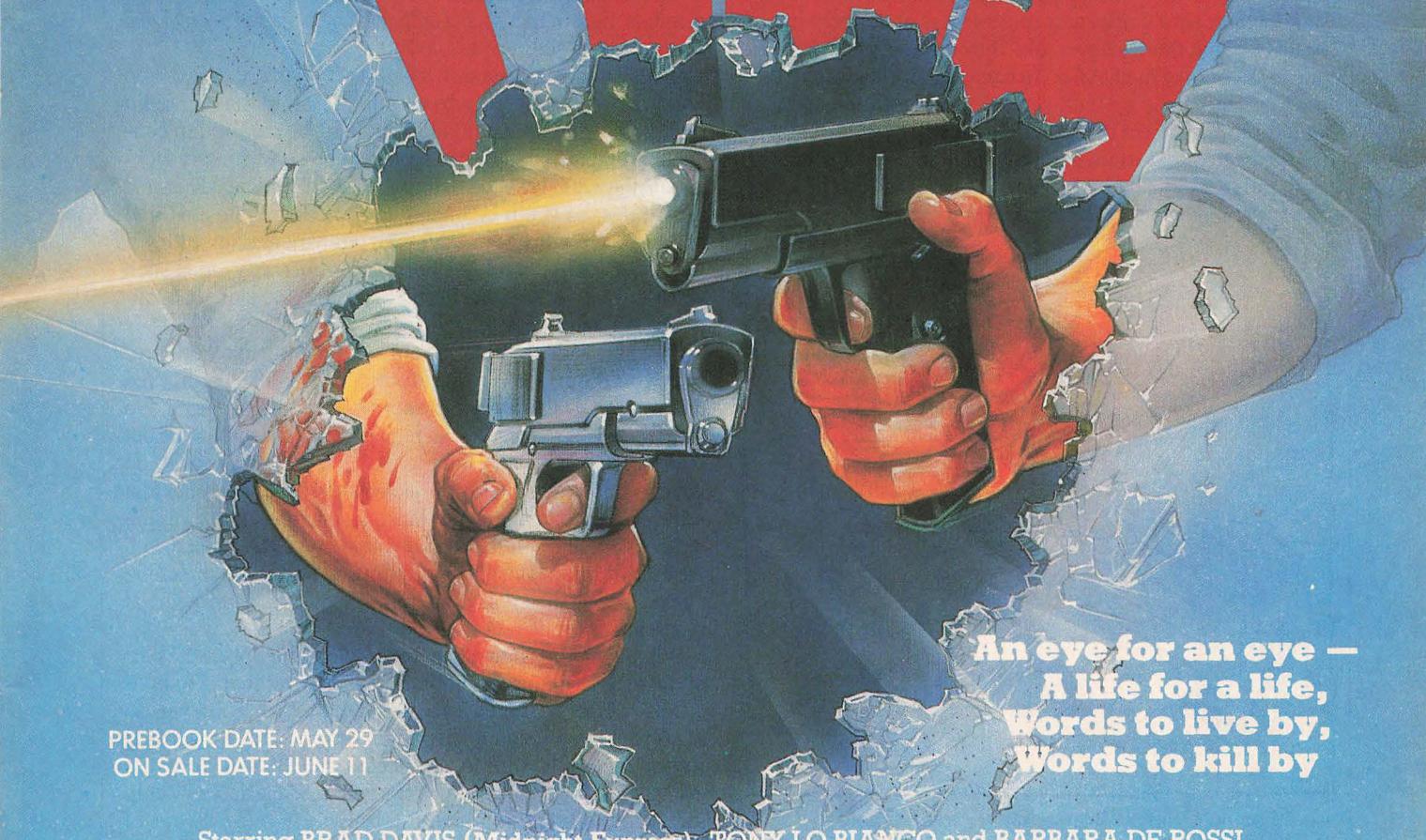
While the system developers say DVI can have an unlimited future, they're not looking for it to move in on home VCRs and conventional videodisc players anytime soon. Because of special integrated circuits, DVI players will not be competitively priced, and the output signal must be fed through a personal computer for playback. A modestly priced player with the necessary computer circuitry built in is a possibility, but anything like that is well down the road.

More immediately the developers see DVI as a challenger to the computer-controlled compact disc-interactive system now being developed by Philips, Sony and others. Like CD-I, DVI can provide a mixture of computer programming, graphics, video images and audio for interactive entertainment and educational programming. And DVI has the added plus of full-motion video. It does, however, have a handicap. CD-I has been in development for several years, its basic specifications are set and a product launch is planned for 1988. For DVI to succeed, it will have to attract companies that until now have been CD-I supporters.

*Robert F. Gerson*

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## The Growing Threat To Your Personal Videotaping Freedom

Just when you thought it was safe to make personal home-video recordings, a severe threat has come along. This time, it rears its ugly head from the audio world. But make no mistake—unless something is done, this threat could spill over into video very quickly. I'm talking about a device called an anticopy chip which has been written into a proposed piece of Congressional legislation. This legislation would infringe upon our recording rights—both audio and video.

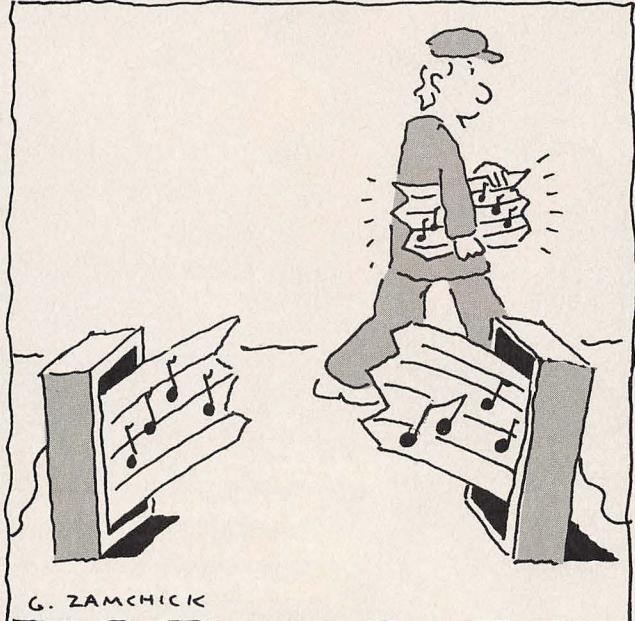
DAT recorders are being sold in Japan and they'll soon be available in the US. DAT stands for digital audiotape, and, as you might guess if you've listened to any compact discs (which also are recorded digitally), DAT recorders offer advantages even the best analog audiocassette decks can't match. That's where the problem comes in. DAT recorders can make perfect recordings that don't deteriorate with each successive generation—provided that the recording is made in the digital-to-digital mode. Theoretically, you could make a perfect copy, another perfect copy from that one and so on. One can understand why record companies, performers and others might be upset about this prospect, and they have a right to be. But the developers of the DAT recorders were well aware of this problem and came up with several foolproof methods that would prevent direct digital-to-digital copying. Of course, they expected that users would be able to copy any analog signal and record it digitally onto a DAT tape. In essence, that

Buried in the files of the now-defunct CBS Technology Center in Stamford, CT, is an invention designed to prevent records and other audio material from being copied. It's a two-part system that puts a deep notch in the frequency response of a recording being made. In effect, it "sucks out" all musical material in the vicinity of about 3,800 Hz. (That's well within the audio range, and even below the highest note on a piano!) Then, a special semiconductor chip is built into the recorders (in this case, a DAT recorder). If you try to record music that's been encoded with this notch or absence of frequencies, the chip senses the lack of those critical frequencies and, after a few seconds, disables the recorder. Never mind the fact that if you listen to the encoded software you may be deprived of some musical content available in the original performance, the engineers who are promoting this chip say you'll never miss those frequencies anyway! Promoters of the idea have managed to convince members of Congress and the administration that it's perfectly okay to mandate, by law, that such a chip must be installed in any DAT recorder brought into this country.

If such a law is passed, it's easy to see what the next step will be. Soon, they'll try to pass laws stating that all audio recorders—digital and nondigital—will be required to contain this chip before they can be sold. Then, they'll start sucking out the 3,800 Hz band of frequencies from all newly issued recordings, so you'll be unable to copy them onto any kind of new tape recorder for your own enjoyment. Next, they'll turn to VCRs. After all, it's been said—correctly—that such video formats as VHS Hi-Fi and Beta Hi-Fi are close in quality to DAT recorders.

So what, you say. You use your VCR mainly to record programs off the air for viewing at your convenience. Well, even that use can be thwarted if the software people get around to forcing legislation that would require anticopy chips to be put into VCRs. How? Very simple. All a broadcaster has to do when transmitting a copy protected show is incorporate that same circuit for sucking out those frequencies in the region of 3,800 Hz, and you'll find that your new VCR—the one with the built-in anticopy chip—will shut down its audio recording tracks. From that point on, unless you are quite good at reading lips, your recording will be useless.

What it all boils down to is yet another attempt on the part of the record companies and the software producers to limit our use of the product we buy from them. What can you do to prevent this incursion on your audio and video recording rights? As usual, write to your state's members of Congress and to the White House, which has endorsed the anticopy chip idea without really thinking it through! □



would be no different from what we've been able to do all along, using any high quality cassette or reel-to-reel tape recorder. Unfortunately, the protection against digital-to-digital recording built into the DAT format by its developers doesn't seem to be satisfying the record companies. They think now is a good time to try to get legislation passed against any sort of copying onto a digital tape recorder.

Leonard Feldman

# A LOADED VCR THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE LOADED TO AFFORD.

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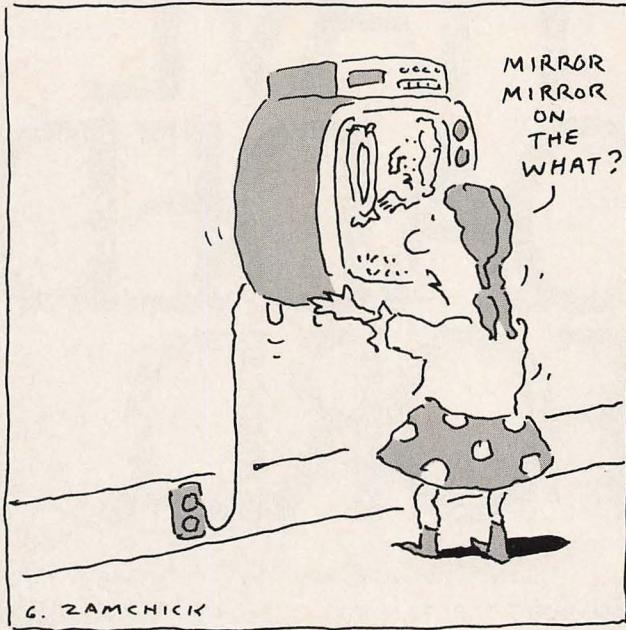
So if you're looking for a VCR with a lot of features, but you don't want to spend a lot of money, consider the Samsung VR2610. Just call 1-800-255-2550 for your nearest dealer.

**SAMSUNG**



## Anticopy System Misfires: Hits Legal Users, Misses Pirates

The letter that really got to me was the one from the guy whose deaf nine-year-old daughter can't watch *Sleeping Beauty*. It seems that Macrovision—the controversial encoding process most video companies now use to prevent illegal tape copying—not only messes up picture quality for many legal viewers, but according to Bob Hendrickson of Salt Lake City, it even destroys the closed captions on some movies. Now his daughter, who relies on closed captions to



deliver the dialog she would otherwise miss, is missing out on *Sleeping Beauty*.

It figures. In my view, Macrovision has been a disaster for video consumers ever since the first tapes were encoded with the process. Hendrickson's discovery that it interferes with the TeleCaption II closed-caption decoder (a fact now confirmed by the National Captioning Institute) is just the latest outrage. His letter is only one example from the huge pile of mail we've received since we first investigated the anticopy issue (see "The Macrovision Mess," December '86 *VR*).

Don't get me wrong. I think the movie companies have every right to protect their movies from illegal duplication. The tape pirates who run off dozens of dupes of a hit movie and then try to palm them off on unsuspecting renters are ripping off the studios *and* consumers. But the Macrovision net doesn't catch the professional copiers; they can easily evade it by using processors or by finding VCR combinations that are immune to the process. Instead, Macrovision makes life difficult for honest viewers, people who just want to rent or buy a movie and watch it at home.

Not long ago Gary Gwizdala, executive vice president of Macrovision (the company that invented the process of the same name), paid us a visit to explain how effective the process is and to claim that the company has received few

"legitimate" complaints. It seems to me Gwizdala doth protest too much—his assurances that the process doesn't degrade picture quality for honest viewers have much the same ring as the tobacco industry's claims that the health risks of smoking are "unproven."

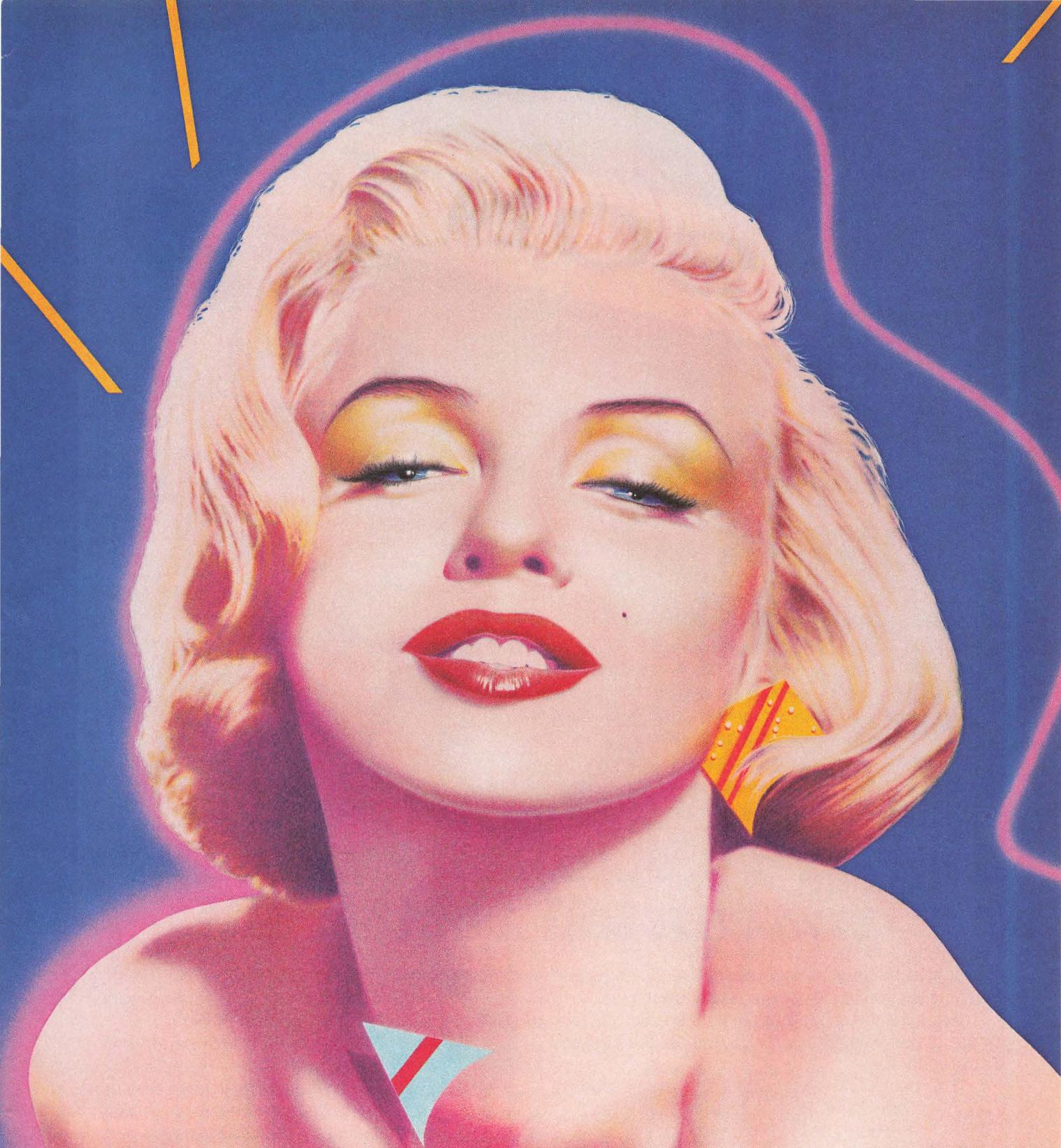
Gwizdala claims that most Macrovision complaints are, in fact, due to other factors. He suggests that viewers adjust the tracking controls on their VCRs each time they put in a tape, and that they turn off the automatic color control on their TV sets. He's got a point; doing these things *will* help moderate the effects of Macrovision, but it smacks of blaming the victim. Most people were perfectly happy with the performance of their VCRs and TV sets until Macrovision came along.

Despite Macrovision's assurances, a stack of letters from irate *VR* readers—who are some of the country's most knowledgeable video consumers—and our own informal tests indicate that the process does cause problems. Big problems. Although the effects vary from one VCR and TV set to another, the most common complaints are color distortion, fluctuating brightness levels and an irritating white glow at the bottom of the screen. For discriminating viewers—especially those who've invested in top quality home equipment and expect decent tapes to play on it—these effects are a constant insult. "The video companies that use Macrovision are interested only in making a buck, no matter what the cost in quality to the consumer," complains one *VR* reader, "[It's] a contemptible rip-off of the consumer," writes another.

To Macrovision's credit, the company keeps working to improve the system. In fact, the company's latest announcement claims that the version of Macrovision in use since November '86 is free of playback problems. That may be true—complaints have tapered off somewhat—but what about tapes released before November? Unless the company recalls them, those movies will still be unplayable on some people's VCRs.

Ironically, the biggest losers in this debacle may be the video companies themselves. By insulting and alienating the most discriminating video consumers—the very people who rent and buy the most prerecorded tapes—the video companies are jeopardizing their own future sales. Instead of paying good money for second-rate Macrovision-treated movies, writes one reader, "now I just wait until they appear on HBO." The movie studios are making a fortune from video sales and rentals, but they still can't shake the idea that the VCR owner is their enemy. They are obsessed with the idea that they could be making millions more if not for illegal dubbing. Because of their fanatical dedication to Macrovision, they could wind up strangling their own golden goose. □

James B. Meigs



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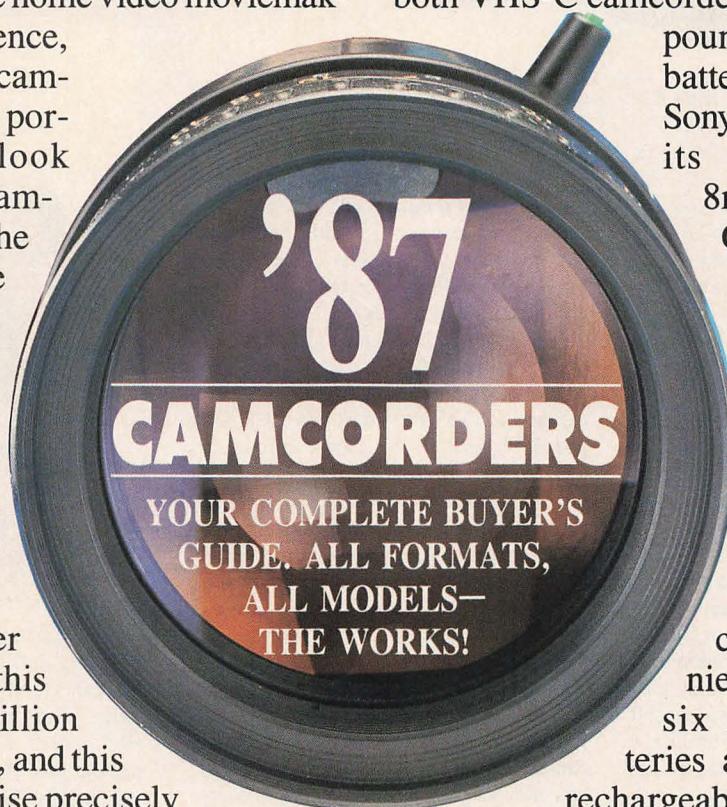
By Glenn Kenny

**C**onsumer electronics riddle: What's big and small at the same time? It's no trick to figure out; it's a camcorder. Selling like crazy, yet calmly compact in your hands, the camcorder is the home video moviemaking tool of preference, causing the videocamera and adjacent portable VCR to look rather quaint. Camcorders combine the functions of those two products, plus they shoot and record at the same time. The lion's share of them even play back what you've shot. Sales of camcorders are up over 30 percent so far this year (over 1.6 million will be sold in '87), and this statistic will surprise precisely no one. Since its introduction in 1982, the camcorder has had no problem achieving consumer acceptance and, indeed, preeminence. The camcorder rules.

Not only does it rule, but also if it gets any smaller, it'll probably start floating away. Manufacturers are shaving ounces, even fractions of ounces, off their more basic, record-only models. These are cam-

corders that are stripped to the bare bones as far as features are concerned, and you have to play back the tapes you shoot with them on a separate deck. But, boy, are they light. JVC's GR-C9 and Zenith's VM6150—both VHS-C camcorders—weigh in at two pounds, 3½ ounces with battery and tape, while Sony's latest variation on its ground-breaking 8mm Handycam, the CCD-M7U, is two pounds, two ounces with battery and tape. Or rather, *batteries* and tape; the CCD-M7U is the first camcorder to run on dry cell batteries, the kind you can buy in a convenience store. It takes six AA alkaline batteries as well as the one rechargeable battery usually supplied with a camcorder.

All of the camcorder innovations have consumers', and even some retailers', heads spinning. Remember all the brouhaha over HQ ("high quality") picture improvement circuitry for VHS? That still hasn't died down yet, but at least HQ is a commonplace term by now. If you've been following the moves home video technology has been





*Aiwa's 8mm CV-50 with LCD monitor.*

making lately, you've no doubt heard of the new format from JVC called Super VHS, which boasts a phenomenal boost in picture quality over normal VHS, the world's dominant video format. Coming hot on its heels from Sony is Extended Definition Beta, which claims picture quality that's almost beyond what US broadcast standards can handle. These formats won't be affecting the camcorder market immediately, but they probably will be making a big noise in 1988. The record mechanisms of most camcorders don't produce pictures of more than approximately 250 lines of resolution (no matter how good the resolution of the camera section is); these new formats are going to come close to doubling that figure. And the more lines of resolution in a video picture, the better that picture's sharpness and detail.

Super VHS and Extended Definition Beta boast better picture quality, but they also promise incompatibility with previous, and comfortable, formats. Industry rumblings about Super 8mm indicate that things are going to get more complicated and will probably stay that way for a while. All of this leads consumers to ask (sometimes in an indignant tone), "What should I buy, and when should I buy it?"

There are no easy answers to those ques-

tions. The consumer can help him- or herself by asking "What do I want?" before asking "What should I get?" The first consideration a consumer should make concerns format. Camcorders come in four: VHS, Beta, VHS-C and 8mm. Let's discuss the pluses and minuses of each.

**VHS:** This format is the most popular in the world. With a VHS camcorder, you can just shoot your home video movies, take out the tape you've shot, put it in a VHS deck and play it back. In most cases, you can play it back through the camcorder as well, with the help of provided cables. The VHS cassette is the largest of the four formats, so it follows that VHS camcorders, particularly full-featured ones, are large as well. They're getting lighter, though. Average weight was once eight pounds; now it's just a little over five.

**Beta:** Devotees of this format the world over are very irked that VHS has won such widespread, overwhelming acceptance, and considering the quality and features Beta offers, they've got a case. In any event, we get angry letters just for mentioning that VHS outsells Beta, even though we can't help the fact. But is Beta dead because VHS outsells it? No. Sony's commitment to the format is

solid. Its Betamovie camcorders are highly renowned, and its Betacams are widely used by video professionals. Sony has introduced a new Betamax camcorder that should be the next best thing to the coming Super formats. The BMC-1000K has Beta IS capability. The original Beta I record/playback speed, which was, to put it simply (but perhaps unfairly, in terms of quality comparison), the Beta equivalent of the VHS standard play mode, was dropped a few years back. But the mode is back on some top-of-the-line Sony decks as Beta IS, an im-



*VX801 from Olympus.*

proved version. Its official name is Super Hi-Band Beta IS, and it delivers the most lines of resolution available on a home VCR today. With this mode incorporated into the BMC-1000K, home video movies have near-professional picture quality.

Sony is still dedicated to the format, and to the quality Beta affords. People who want



to use camcorders for more than just taping their daughter's wedding will be well served by the format.

**VHS-C:** The VHS cassette is big, so to serve the camcorder buyer who highly values portability, VHS-C was invented. Basically a scaled-down VHS cassette, a VHS-C cassette can be played back on a VHS deck with the help of an adapter. Instant compatibility. Until recently, the VHS-C cassette was only able to record 20 minutes of video. Now, more VHS-C camcorders have two recording speeds—SP and



Sharp's VC-C50UA.

EP—and this bumps maximum recording time to an hour. But innovation in this format doesn't stop there.

Many of the best ideas for improving a camcorder's performance as a camera come, not surprisingly, from camera manufacturers. Minolta, for example, has developed an auto-focusing system for its latest VHS-C camcorder, the Master Series C-3300, that, among other things, eliminates the need for



Magnavox's full-size VHS VR8293.

the macro-focus feature most camcorders include for taking extreme close-ups. The system continually auto focuses from the surface of the front lens to infinity. While most auto-focus systems use infrared technology, Minolta's uses a phase detection, through-the-lens system in which the image used to determine focus is the image formed in the lens, no matter how close the lens is to its subject. Hence, there's no longer a need for a macro setting. This focusing system works in perfect harmony with the six-power zoom lens by means of a micro-computer built into the camcorder. The result? A nearly foolproof aim-and-shoot method that won't let you down when you're going for shots of a more complex nature.

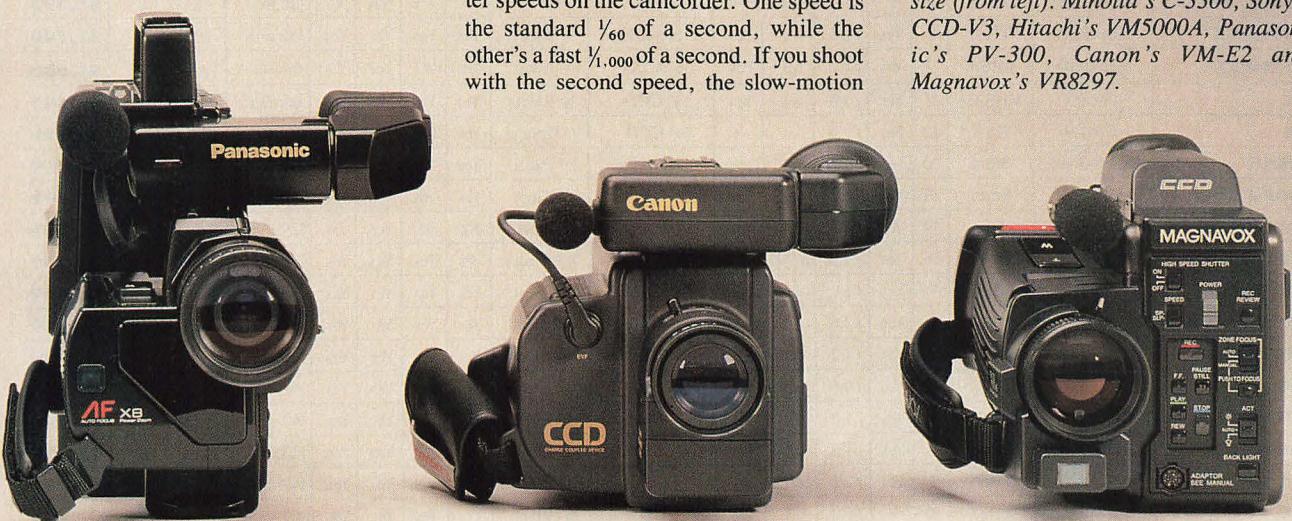
Some wag once said that movies were so named because they did—move, that is. If you've ever played back a fast-moving home video in slow-motion, you may have found yourself looking at a lot of blur. Panasonic's latest VHS-C camcorder, the PV-100, has tackled that problem by including two shutter speeds on the camcorder. One speed is the standard  $1/60$  of a second, while the other's a fast  $1/1000$  of a second. If you shoot with the second speed, the slow-motion

playback on a four-head VHS machine will be as clear as day. Perfect for the dad who wants to see just what's wrong with his golf swing, or the high school athlete who wants to argue a ref's controversial call. GE's 9-9710 also has a similar function.

**8mm:** The tiny terror. With exciting audio capabilities and a cassette that's smaller than an audiocassette, the 8mm format is making waves. It sure helps things on the compactness side, but that doesn't mean the hardware to go with this format is all no-frills. The CCD-V110 from Sony is jam-packed with features, such as a built-in character generator and an interval record feature which lets you create video animation and time-lapse effects.

One of the built-in advantages of the 8mm format is the presence of flying erase heads. Whereas stationary erase heads, which are not mounted on the record head drum, often produce noisy in-camera cuts, no such prob-

An array of camcorders, from tiny to full-size (from left): Minolta's C-3300, Sony's CCD-V3, Hitachi's VM5000A, Panasonic's PV-300, Canon's VM-E2 and Magnavox's VR8297.



lems occur with flying erase heads. This makes in-camera cuts with an 8mm camcorder a breeze. Enthusiasts of 8mm claim that a great boon to picture quality will arrive in the form of metal-evaporated tape. Metal-particle tape is used in 8mm now, and results haven't been bad at all. But metal-evaporated tape supposedly will produce a picture of better quality. Still in the development stages, metal-evaporated 8mm tape won't be around in the immediate future.

On the audio side of the audio/video configuration, the innovations aren't coming at

such a fast clip. For example, most of the 8mm camcorders on the market today don't utilize the format's unique capability to record PCM (pulse code modulation, a form of digital recording) stereo. Zenith, however, has introduced the first VHS Hi-Fi camcorder, the VM7100. The VHS Hi-Fi recording method (which records sound over the entire width of the videotape, rather than just a narrow strip on the edge) requires the use of two extra recording heads and more room for the accompanying electronics.

All of these formats offer advantages. As

to which will dominate in the future, we can't predict. Some people who own VHS gear are wary of getting an 8mm camcorder because of incompatibility. But incompatibility is in the eye of the beholder; certain camcorders, such as Canon's VM-E2, have a small adapter strip that attaches to the side of the camcorder and lets you hook it into any monitor/receiver via an RF output or direct audio/video jacks. That might not fit everyone's definition of compatibility, but it certainly qualifies as user friendly.

After choosing a format, your next con-

## CAMCORDERS

MANUFACTURER	MODEL NO.	FORMAT	MINIMUM ILLUMINATION (lux)	AUTO FOCUS	APERTURE	ZOOM RATIO	POWER ZOOM	PICKUP DEVICE	VIEWFINDER	CONTINUOUS WHITE BALANCE	PLAYBACK IN CAMERA	SCAN	FREEZE-FRAME	MAXIMUM RECORD LENGTH	DIMENSIONS (HxWxD, to nearest inch), WEIGHT	PRICE
<b>AIWA</b>	CV-50	8mm	19	No	f 1.8	—	No	CCD	Optical	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	120 min.	5x5x8;2 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,300</b>
<b>AIWA</b>	CV-80	8mm	19	Yes	f 1.4	6:1	Yes	CCD	1" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	7x5x15;5 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,795</b>
<b>CANON</b>	VM-E2	8mm	8	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	1/10" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	6x6x11;3 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,699</b>
<b>CHINON</b>	C8-C60	8mm	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	1/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	15x8x5;5 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,995</b>
<b>CHINON</b>	CV-T60	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" Newvicon	1/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	15x8x5;5 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,995</b>
<b>CHINON</b>	CV-T60G	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" Newvicon	1/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	15x8x5;5 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,895</b>
<b>ELMO</b>	ECR-8	8mm	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	1/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	6x5x10;2 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,850</b>
<b>GE</b>	9-9606	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" Newvicon	1/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	9x5x15;5 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,499</b>
<b>GE</b>	9-9608	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" Newvicon	1/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	9x5x15;5 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,599</b>
<b>GE</b>	9-9610	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	8:1	Yes	CCD	1/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	9x5x15;5 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,799</b>
<b>GE</b>	9-9710	VHS-C*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	CCD	1/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	60 min.	6x5x10;3 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,699</b>
<b>GE</b>	9-9712	VHS-C*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	CCD	1/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	60 min.	6x5x10;3 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,799</b>
<b>GOLDSTAR</b>	GS-8AF	8mm	19	Yes	f 1.4	6:1	Yes	CCD	1" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	5x6x14;4 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,695</b>
<b>GOLDSTAR</b>	GVM-70AF	VHS*	19	Yes	f 1.4	6:1	Yes	CCD	1" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	240 min.	8x5x15;6 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,695</b>
<b>HITACHI</b>	VM5000A	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	2/3" MOS	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	8x7x14;6 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,695</b>
<b>HITACHI</b>	VMC50A	VHS-C*	10	Yes	f 1.4	6:1	Yes	2/3" MOS	1/2" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	60 min.	6x5x9;3 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,399</b>
<b>INSTANT REPLAY</b>	66IT3	VHS	10	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" Newvicon	1/2" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	8x6x14;7 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,695</b>
<b>INSTANT REPLAY</b>	92IT3	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/3" Newvicon	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	8x6x14;6 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,895</b>
<b>INSTANT REPLAY</b>	93IT3	VHS*	20	Yes	f 1.2	8:1	Yes	CCD	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	8x6x12;5	<b>\$1,995</b>
<b>INSTANT REPLAY</b>	Ultra ++	8mm	20	**	f 1	NA	—	CCD	†	—	No	NA	No	120 min.	4x4x1;2 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,395</b>
<b>JC PENNEY</b>	686-5335	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" Newvicon	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	9x15x5;7	<b>\$1,700</b>
<b>JC PENNEY</b>	686-5600	VHS-C	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	60 min.	6x10x5;3 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,500</b>
<b>JVC</b>	GR-C7	VHS-C*	15	Yes	f 1.6	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	3/5" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	60 min.	7x5x9;2 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,495</b>
<b>JVC</b>	GR-C9	VHS-C*	10	No	f 1.6	—	—	1/2" CCD	3/5" Optical	Yes	No	No	No	60 min.	4x4x8;1 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,150</b>
<b>KODAK</b>	MVS-3440	8mm	10	No	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" Newvicon	1/2" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	240 min.	5x6x12;4 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,499</b>
<b>KODAK</b>	MVS-3460	8mm	10	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" Newvicon	1/2" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	240 min.	5x6x12;4 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,799</b>
<b>KYOCERA</b>	KD-200K	8mm	19	Yes	f 1.4	6:1	Yes	2/3" CCD	1" Elect.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	8x5x14;5 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,745</b>
<b>KYOCERA</b>	KD-1100U	8mm	16	Yes	f 1.6	2.5:1	No	2/3" CCD	1/10" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	6x7x10;3 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,500</b>
<b>MAGNAVOX</b>	VR8293	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	8:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	9x15x5;5 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,699</b>
<b>MAGNAVOX</b>	VR8297	VHS-C	7	Yes	f 1.6	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	60 min.	NA;3 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,699</b>
<b>MAGNAVOX</b>	VR9240	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	NA	<b>\$1,699</b>
<b>MINOLTA</b>	C-3300	VHS-C*	15	Yes	f 1.6	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	7/10" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	60 min.	5x5x10;3	<b>NA</b>
<b>MINOLTA</b>	CR-1200SAF	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" MOS	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	7x8x14;5 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$2,085</b>
<b>MINOLTA</b>	CR-8000SAF	8mm	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/3" MOS	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	5x5x12;3 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$2,165</b>
<b>NEC</b>	V30U	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	8:1	Yes	CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	15x9x5;5 $\frac{1}{2}$	<b>\$1,895</b>
<b>NEC</b>	V40U	VHS*	10	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	NA	<b>NA</b>

\* HQ. \*\* Zone plus macro. † Optic plus wireless remote. ‡ With separate player/recorder.



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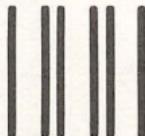
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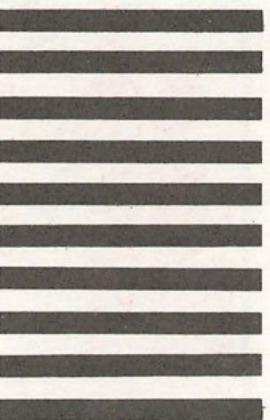
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cern should be features. While the very lightweight, record-only camcorders have only one focus setting and a small white-balance switch, heavier models offer lots of features to choose from. Many of the common standards relate to camera operation: automatic focusing, power zoom lens, automatic iris and so on. White-balance settings are important for keeping the colors of your home videos true; inaccurate white balance can result in a bluish video picture. If you're given the opportunity to do some hands-on testing of a camcorder at your

video dealer, the accuracy of the white-balance setting is a good thing to look out for.

Besides eyeing features, you should pay close attention to how the camcorder feels when you hold it. Is it comfortable? How's the balance in your hands? Many camcorders are designed for one-handed use, which most novices look at as a benefit. But holding a camcorder with one hand often results in shaky, unsteady shots. Canon designed its VM-E2 with the power zoom controls on the opposite side of the handgrip, where the record controls are, pretty much

forcing two-handed use. The results, though, are noticeably more stable home videos.

So widespread is the camcorder phenomenon that Fisher-Price has introduced a camcorder designed especially for children: the PXL-2000, which puts over 10 minutes of pixelated, black-and-white video on a 90-minute audiocassette. Don't worry, that doesn't *really* constitute a new format. But it does prove that in a relatively brief period of time, the camcorder has become a staple of the video life, and will remain so for a long, long while. □

## CAMCORDERS

MANUFACTURER	MODEL NO.	FORMAT	MINIMUM ILLUMINATION (lux)	AUTO FOCUS	APERTURE	ZOOM RATIO	POWER ZOOM	PICKUP DEVICE	VIEWFINDER	CONTINUOUS WHITE BALANCE	PLAYBACK IN CAMERA	SCAN	FREEZE-FRAME	MAXIMUM RECORD LENGTH	DIMENSIONS; WEIGHT (HxWxD, to nearest inch; pounds)	PRICE
NEC	EM8	8mm	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	CCD	7/10" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	4x8x13;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	\$1,699
OLYMPUS	VX403	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	8:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	14x4x8;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>5</sub>	\$1,950
OLYMPUS	VX404	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	7x4x9;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	NA
OLYMPUS	VX801	8mm	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	6x5x11;2 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	\$1,850
PANASONIC	PV-100	VHS-C*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	60 min.	6x10x5;3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	\$1,600
PANASONIC	PV-210	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" Newvicon	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	9x5x15;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>5</sub>	\$1,450
PANASONIC	PV-220	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" Newvicon	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	9x5x15;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>5</sub>	\$1,500
PANASONIC	PV-300	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	8:1	Yes	CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	9x5x15;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>5</sub>	\$2,000
PENTAX	PV-C800A	8mm	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	2/3" MOS	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	5x5x12;3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>5</sub>	\$1,749
PHILCO	VCR807	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" Newvicon	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	NA	\$1,699
QUASAR	VM-11	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" Newvicon	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	9x15x5;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	\$1,650
QUASAR	VM-20	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	8:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	9x15x5;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	\$1,800
QUASAR	VM-50	VHS-C*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	20 min.	6x10x5;3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	\$1,800
RCA	CPRI00	VHS-C	10	Yes	f 1.4	6:1	Yes	2/3" MOS	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	60 min.	6x5x9;3	\$1,399
RCA	CMR300	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	2/3" MOS	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	8x7x15;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	\$1,499
RICOH	R-250	8mm	9	Yes	f 1.6	2.5:1	No	2/3" CCD	7/10" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	5x6x9;3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	\$1,295
SANYO	VM-8	8mm	19	Yes	f 1.4	6:1	Yes	CCD	1" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	7x5x14;5	\$1,300
SEARS	5374	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.6	6:1	Yes	MOS	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	7x5x13;4 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>5</sub>	\$1,299
SEARS	53721	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" Saticon	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	7x4x13;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	\$1,290
SHARP	VC-C200UA	VHS*	10	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	2/3" MOS	1/2" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	160 min.	7x5x14;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	\$1,800
SHARP	VC-C50UA	VHS-C*	15	Yes	f 1.6	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	3/5" Optical	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	60 min.	7x5x9;2 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	\$1,600
SONY	BMC-660K	Beta‡	16	Yes	f 1.4	6:1	Yes	2/3" CCD	Optical	No	No	No	No	200 min.	7x6x15;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	\$1,495
SONY	BMC-1000K	Beta	21	No	f 1.4	6:1	Yes	2/3" CCD	1" Elect.	Yes	No	No	No	180 min.	7x6x15;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>16</sub>	\$1,795
SONY	CCD-M8U	8mm	15	No	f 1.6	—	No	2/3" CCD	Optical	No	No	No	No	120 min.	4x4x9;2 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>16</sub>	\$1,250
SONY	CCD-M9U	8mm	15	No	f 1.6	—	No	2/3" CCD	Optical	No	No	No	No	120 min.	6x5x11;3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>16</sub>	\$1,350
SONY	CCD-V3	8mm	9	Yes	f 1.6	25:1	No	2/3" CCD	7/10" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	5x6x9;3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	\$1,500
SONY	CCD-V8AFU	8mm	14	Yes	f 1.4	6:1	Yes	2/3" CCD	1" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	5x8x14;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>16</sub>	\$1,795
SONY	CCD-VII0	8mm	6	Yes	f 1.4	6:1	Yes	2/3" CCD	7/10" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	120 min.	4x8x15;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>16</sub>	\$1,995
SYLVANIA	VCC155	VHS-C*	7	Yes	f 1.6	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	60 min.	NA;3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	\$1,699
SYLVANIA	VCC157	VHS*	7	Yes	f 1.6	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	NA	\$1,699
TEKNIKA	CX7II	VHS	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	160 min.	9x15x5;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	NA
TEKNIKA	CX75I	VHS-C*	7	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	2/3" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	60 min.	8x10x5;3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	NA
ZENITH	VM6150	VHS-C*	10	No	f 1.6	—	No	1/2" CCD	Optical	Yes	No	No	No	60 min.	4x3x8;2 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>5</sub>	\$1,000
ZENITH	VM6200	VHS-C*	15	Yes	f 1.6	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	7/5" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	60 min.	7x5x9;3	\$1,200
ZENITH	VM7100‡‡	VHS*	8	Yes	f 1.2	6:1	Yes	1/2" CCD	7/5" Elect.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	480 min.	8x6x13;5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	\$1,795

\*HQ ‡Super Beta. ‡‡Hi-Fi.



# GREAT

# VR'S SPECIAL GIFT GUIDE FOR DADS AND GRADS

Now that gifts of fountain pens and neckties have given way to VCRs and pre-recorded tapes, who wouldn't love a tiny TV or portable CD? On the following pages, we've brought together some of the season's best gift ideas. Take our suggestions or you can just let your imagination run wild.

## LET'S GET SMALL.

And they're getting smaller all the time with Casio's TV400 color LCD TV. This 5x3x1½ (HxWxD, in inches) wonder weighs just 9½ ounces and has a two-inch screen. It comes equipped with a built-in speaker, backlight and rod antenna, along with an external power jack for an earphone or an AC adapter. For those on the go, it can run on four AA batteries, one rechargeable battery or even a car battery. \$199.95.

## GET CARRIED AWAY

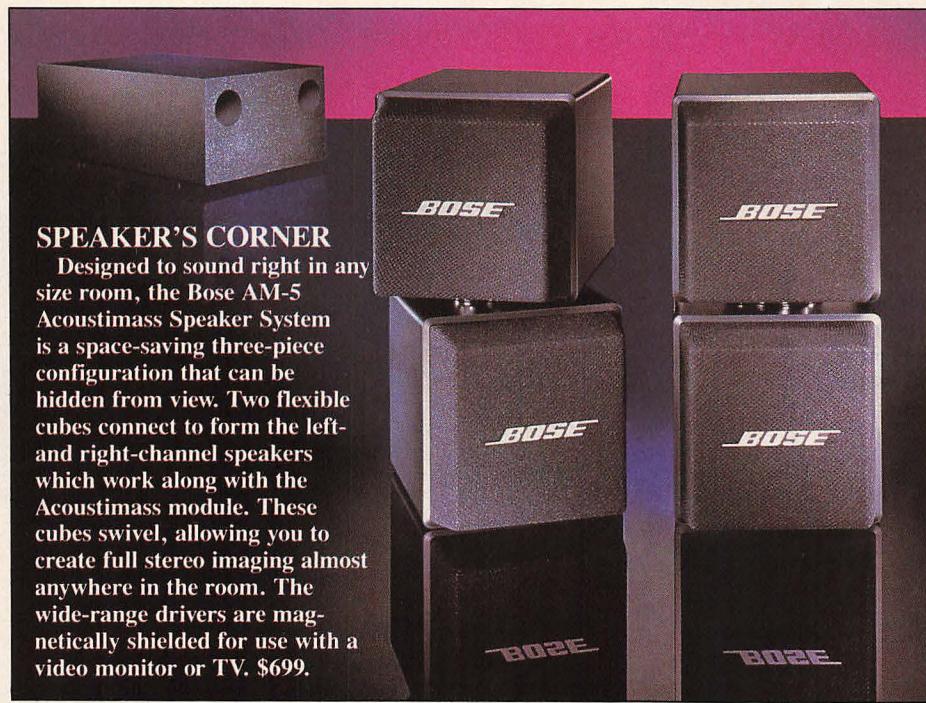
Toshiba's XR-P9 compact disc player fits the bill for use home or away, with two-way power capability for complete portability. It comes equipped with a three-beam laser pickup system, 16-program random memory with repeat, LCD readout, headphone jack and wireless remote. This compact package measures around 5x2x7 (HxWxD, in inches) and weighs in at  $1\frac{1}{10}$  pounds. \$349.



## LOOKING BACK

Give Dad a trip down memory lane with *The March of Time*, Embassy Home Entertainment's collection of documentary cassettes surveying "American Lifestyles, 1939-1950." This award-winning series, originally produced as a theatrical newsreel by *Time* magazine, is available as a six-volume set for \$149.70. Individual volumes are \$24.95 each.

# GEAR!



## SPEAKER'S CORNER

Designed to sound right in any size room, the Bose AM-5 Acoustimass Speaker System is a space-saving three-piece configuration that can be hidden from view. Two flexible cubes connect to form the left- and right-channel speakers which work along with the Acoustimass module. These cubes swivel, allowing you to create full stereo imaging almost anywhere in the room. The wide-range drivers are magnetically shielded for use with a video monitor or TV. \$699.



## FOR STARTERS

Whether pro or novice, any videophile will find the 3M Scotch VCR Starter Kit a useful gift. The money-saving package contains a T-120 videotape, head cleaning cassette, roll of relabel tape, VCR dust cover and VHS cassette storage box—all from Scotch. The kit is available with four different grades of tape. \$24.95 to \$27.95.



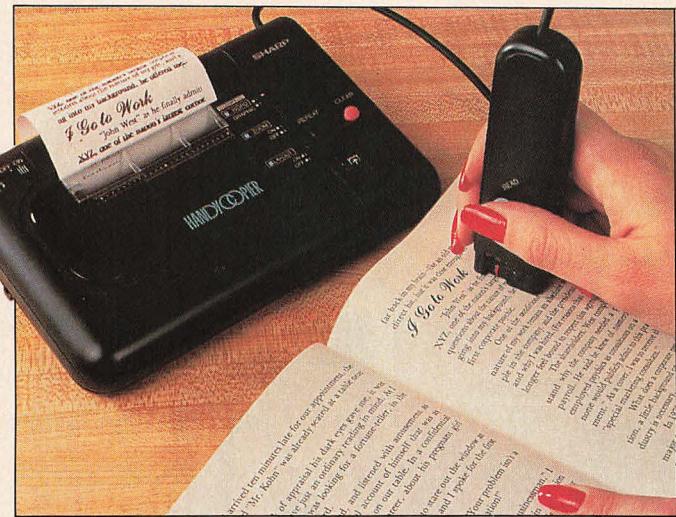
## APPLE OF YOUR EYE

You don't have to be in school to give—or receive—this juicy Apple. The IIgs system, the newest member of the Apple II family, features increased memory, enhanced color graphics and sound capabilities, and fast processing speeds. It has 256K of RAM, 128K of ROM and eight expansion slots. \$999.

## HAVE STUDIO WILL TRAVEL

It may look like an ordinary black suitcase, but inside Showtime Video Ventures' Studio in a Suitcase is a five-component video processing and special effects studio. Included are a special effects generator, genlock/power supply (Gensync), colorizer, audio/visual processor and color processor. They're already connected; all you do is plug in your camera and VCR. The system comes complete with cables, diagrams and handy storage compartments. Components may also be purchased separately. \$2,699.





## COPYCAT

Perfect for a student or corporate executive, Sharp's Z-HC1 Handy Copier fits neatly into a briefcase. With a scan of its wand, the Handy Copier prints selected material onto three-inch thermal paper in seconds. A separate printer makes handling easy. Word and graphic modes, a dual-column layout mode (which takes information from two sources and prints it side by side) and a zoom feature (which magnifies copy to twice its normal size) make this a versatile tool for anyone. The Handy Copier is rechargeable for use virtually anywhere. \$189.95.

## NO STRINGS ATTACHED

Ambico's V-0625 wireless lapel microphone clips onto clothing and allows remote recording from up to 100 feet. The receiver mounts on a camcorder or camera and has an on/off volume switch with LED. A multiplug output and RCA-plug adapter make it compatible with most video and audio equipment. \$89.95.



## TV IN THE SHOWER?

Want to take a shower with Bryant and Jane in the morning? Turn on Sony's ICF-S77W Tap Tunes water-resistant radio and tune in to the audio portion of your favorite TV show. It comes with a built-in LCD digital clock, TV band tuner, AM/FM radio, automatic power-off switch, mounting bracket and strap. Great for the dorm, not to mention the hot tub. \$54.95.



## PLAYTIME

From Citizen the VCP-5MU, a space-saving combination videocassette player with a built-in five-inch color monitor, can play any prerecorded VHS tape for up to 120 minutes. Use it indoors, out—even on a plane—with AC/DC power or the optional battery pack. It weighs just 22 pounds and measures approximately 5x16x13 (HxWxD, in inches). \$599.95. Optional accessories package: \$149.95.



## PRETTY IN PINK

And it's distinguished in black, rich in ivory. Now Panasonic has taken a fashionable approach and added a choice of color to several of its product lines. In addition to the PV-2700 VCRs pictured here, the color coordination extends to personal stereos, miniheadphones, solar calculators and even cordless telephones. For the aesthetically oriented person on your gift list, the PV-2700 VCR's design sports rounded contours,

matching remotes, and the black version is available with gold or silver highlights—all in a sleek 4x15x12 (HxWxD, in inches), 11-pound package. On the functional side, this two-head VCR features HQ circuitry, 100-channel, cable-compatible tuning, three record and play speeds, high speed search and automatic power functions. It also has seven-day/two-event programmability. Priced at about \$350.

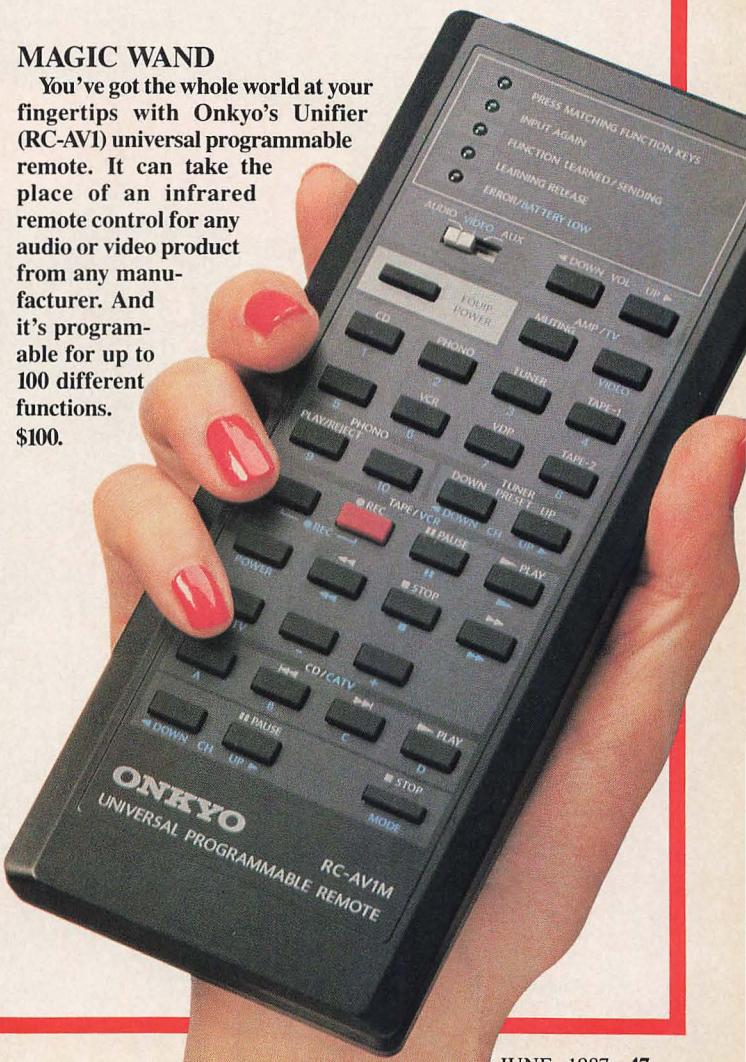


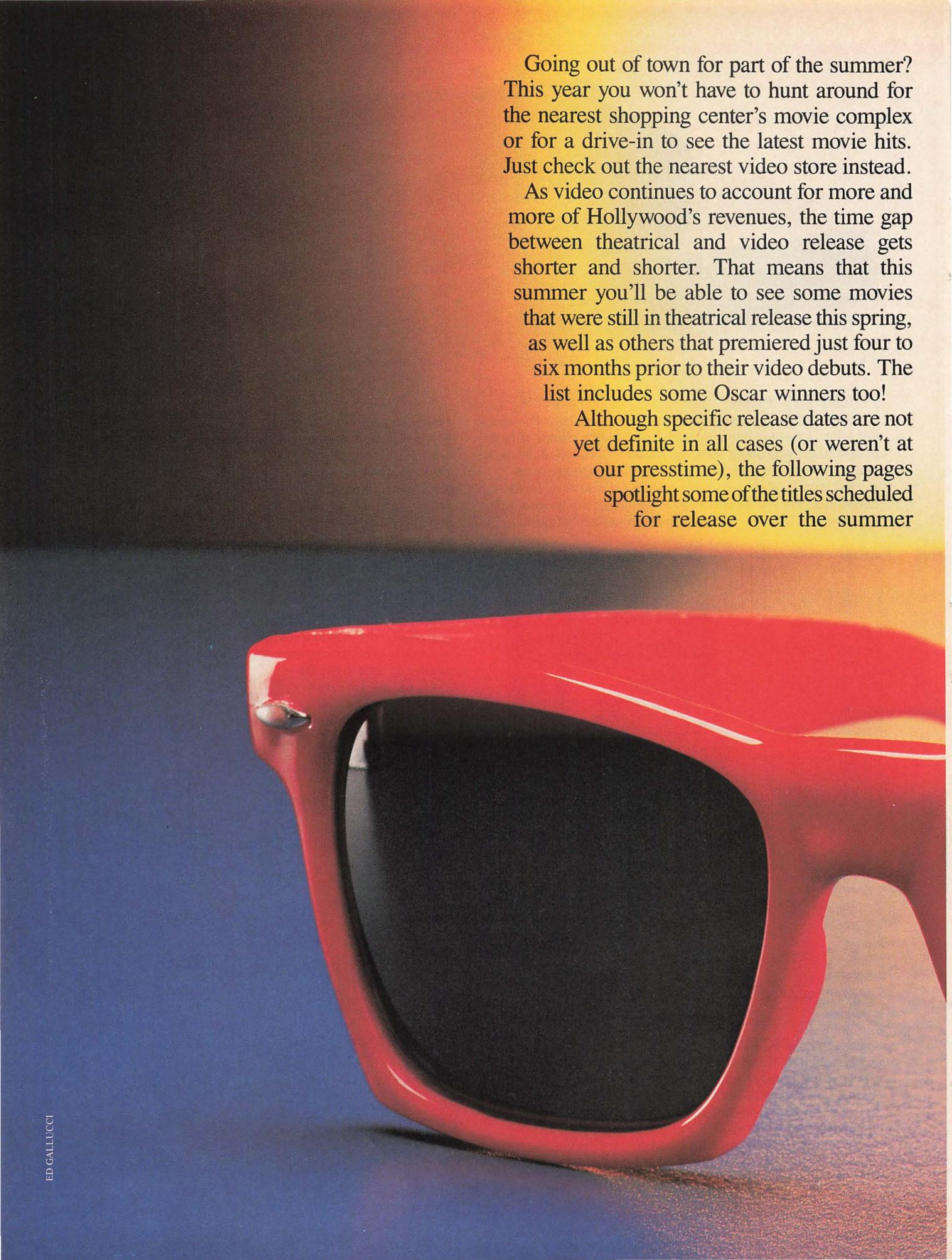
## GET THE PICTURE

With Digital Vision's Computereyes video digitizer you can capture images from a standard video source (camera, VCR, disc) and transfer them to your computer in as little as 12 seconds. The Computereyes package includes an interface module, software and owner's manual. Available in color for Atari ST, or black-and-white for the Apple II series, Atari, Commodore and IBM PC and compatibles. \$249.95.

## MAGIC WAND

You've got the whole world at your fingertips with Onkyo's Unifier (RC-AVI) universal programmable remote. It can take the place of an infrared remote control for any audio or video product from any manufacturer. And it's programmable for up to 100 different functions. \$100.





Going out of town for part of the summer? This year you won't have to hunt around for the nearest shopping center's movie complex or for a drive-in to see the latest movie hits. Just check out the nearest video store instead.

As video continues to account for more and more of Hollywood's revenues, the time gap between theatrical and video release gets shorter and shorter. That means that this summer you'll be able to see some movies that were still in theatrical release this spring, as well as others that premiered just four to six months prior to their video debuts. The list includes some Oscar winners too!

Although specific release dates are not yet definite in all cases (or weren't at our presstime), the following pages spotlight some of the titles scheduled for release over the summer

months, into the early fall. *Video Review's* regular critics, of course, will be reviewing most of them in upcoming issues.

P.S. If you were hoping to say "G'day" to Australian superstar Paul Hogan as *Crocodile Dundee* on your VCR this summer, you may have to wait a bit longer. Paramount now expects to keep the theatrical blockbuster under video wraps until around Christmas.

Fans of *VR*'s "Video Hunter" column will be happy to see on the list quite a few vintage movies that have long languished in the studio vaults—including previously unavailable movies starring Judy Garland, Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Charles Boyer and even Mickey Mouse. Quite a few international classics will also be released for the first time in the US. In short, there's something for all tastes.

# SUMMER SMASHES

A SNEAK PEEK AT SOME OF THE  
BIGGEST NEW MOVIES COMING TO  
A VIDEO STORE NEAR YOU.

By Roy Hemming and Gregory P. Fagan

## OSCAR PICKS

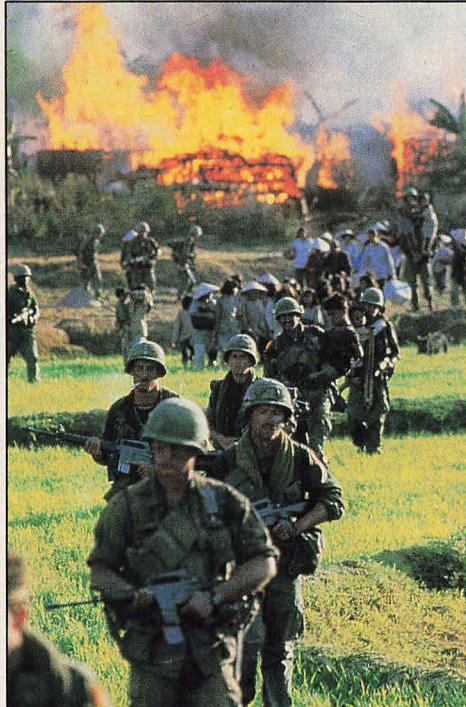
**PLATOON** (*Vestron*) The big Oscar winner (four statuettes) hopefully marches into video this summer if legal problems can be solved. It's Oliver Stone's hard-hitting view of Vietnam. With Tom Berenger, Willem Dafoe, Charlie Sheen. 1986.

**HANNAH AND HER SISTERS** (*HBO/Cannon*) Winner for Best Original Screenplay. Another landmark in Woody Allen's ongoing investigation into contemporary urban relationships. With Allen, Mia Farrow, Oscar-winner Michael Caine, Dianne Wiest (Best Supporting Actress), Carrie Fisher, Maureen O'Sullivan. 1986.

**THE MISSION** (*Warner*) A slave trader and a Jesuit team up in 19th century South America to help the Indians fight the colonialists—all to Chris Menges' Oscar-winning cinematography. A Cannes Festival winner. With Robert DeNiro, Jeremy Irons. Directed by Roland Joffe. 1986.

**CRIMES OF THE HEART** (*Karl-Lorimar*) Oscar nominee Beth Henley's adaptation of her seriocomic Broadway play about three Carolina sisters. With Diane Keaton, Jessica Lange, Oscar-nominated Sissy Spacek, Sam Shepard, Oscar-nominated Tess Harper, Hurd Hatfield. Director: Bruce Beresford. 1986.

**HOOSIERS** (*Vestron*) Indiana *Rocky* in high tops, and Dennis Hopper's Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actor. Also with Gene Hackman, Barbara Hershey. Directed by David Anspaugh. 1986.



Among Oscar winners and contenders set for summer video releases are *Best Picture* *Platoon* (above); *Hoosiers* (top right) with Gene Hackman; Sidney Lumet's *The Morning After* (lower right) with Jeff Bridges and Jane Fonda.

**THE DECLINE OF THE AMERICAN EMPIRE** (*MCA*) Or the rise and triumph of Canadian moviemaking—nominated as Best Foreign Film. Denys Arcand's big carnal chill in the Great White North. 1986.

## BIOGRAPHY

**MARLENE** (*Embassy*) Maximilian Schell's unorthodox, much-lauded study of the legendary Dietrich's life and career, utilizing her voice from recent interviews mixed with vintage footage and imaginative filmic re-creations. 1986.

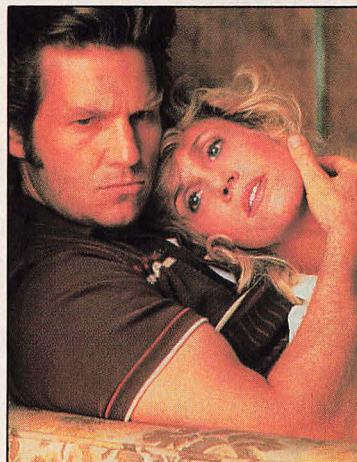
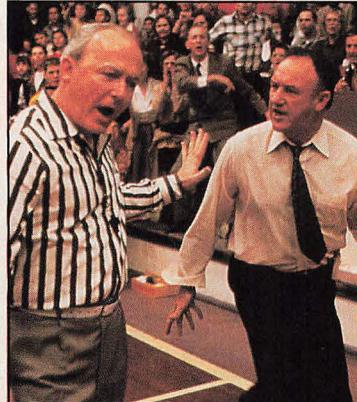
**JANIS** (*MCA*) Howard Alk and Seaton Findlay's sympathetic documentary about Janis Joplin, made with her family's cooperation. Includes a dozen or so song performances. 1977.

## COMEDY

**MANNEQUIN** (*Media*) Boy meets mannequin; boy falls for mannequin; she comes to life; complications mount. With Kim Cattrall, Andrew McCarthy, Estelle Getty (of TV's *Golden Girls*). Directed by Michael Gottlieb. 1987.

**CRITICAL CONDITION** (*Paramount*) Richard Pryor flies over the cuckoo's nest when he's mistaken for an M.D. in a disaster-wrecked hospital. Also with Rachel Ticotin, Ruben Blades, Sylvia Miles, Bob Dishy. Director: Michael Apted. 1987.

**BURGLAR** (*Warner*) Whoopi Goldberg as a cat burglar trying to cover her claw prints for a bigger crime she didn't commit. Also



with Bobcat Goldthwait, G.W. Bailey. Directed by Hugh Wilson. 1987.

**KNIGHTS AND EMERALDS** (*Warner*) Offbeat, often disarming British comedy about rival marching bands and majorette troupes. With Christopher Wild, Beverley Hills, Warren Mitchell, Nadim Sawalha. Director: Ian Emes. 1986.

**THE GOLDEN CHILD** (*Paramount*) Tart-tongued Eddie Murphy heads for Nepal on the trail of a kidnapped god-child held captive by Charles Dance and the demons from hell. Also with Charlotte Lewis. Directed by Michael Ritchie. 1986.

**THREE AMIGOS** (*HBO/Cannon*) Montezuma's revenge on *The Magnificent Seven* and some other spoofable Westerns. With Chevy Chase, Steve Martin, Martin Short. Director: John Landis. 1986.

**IMPURE THOUGHTS** (*Charter*) An off-beat fantasy about a Viet GI, a gay writer and a businessman who end up in purgatory and try (through flashbacks) to discover why they're there. Called by one critic "a Catholic *Twilight Zone*." With Brad Dourif, Lane Davies, John Putch, Terry Beaver. Director: Michael A. Simpson. 1986.

**JUMPIN' JACK FLASH** (*CBS/Fox*) Whoopi Goldberg gets involved with international spies via a computer terminal. Also with Stephen Collins, Carol Kane, John Wood, Roscoe Lee Browne, Jim Belushi. Directed by ex-*Laverne & Shirley* star Penny Marshall. 1986.

**HOST FEVER** (*Charter*) Sherman Hemsley (of TV's *Amen*) heads the cast of this mystery-comedy, set for a late summer or early fall video release. 1987.

## DRAMA

**84 CHARING CROSS ROAD** (*RCA/Columbia*) A pen-pal romance between a London bookseller and an American bookworm blossoms into unrequited love. With Anne Bancroft, Anthony Hopkins, Judi Dench. Directed by David Jones. 1987.

**NIGHT MOTHER** (*MCA*) The Pulitzer Prize-winning Broadway play about a mother's efforts to talk her daughter out of suicide. With Anne Bancroft, Sissy Spacek, Ed Berke. Director: Tom Moore. 1986.

**THAT'S LIFE!** (*Vestron*) Blake Edwards' seriocomic follow-up (of sorts) to his hit '80s midlife panic. This time it's about turning 60. With Jack Lemmon, Julie Andrews, Sally Kellerman, Robert Loggia. 1986.

**THE MEN'S CLUB** (*Paramount*) A group of fortyish swingers face up to their foibles and failures. With Roy Scheider, Frank Langella, Harvey Keitel, Treat Williams, David Dukes, Stockard Channing, Ann Dusenberry. Director: Peter Medak. 1986.

**DUET FOR ONE** (*MGM/UA*) Julie Andrews' moving portrait of a famous concert violinist stricken with multiple sclerosis. Also with Alan Bates, Max von Sydow. Director: Andrei Konchalovsky. 1987.

**RED-HEADED STRANGER** (*Charter*) Willie Nelson pickin' and prayin' as a

travelin' parson. Also with Royal Dano, Morgan Fairchild. 1986.

**THE WHISTLE BLOWER** (Embassy) A computer programmer gets mixed up in murder and international intrigue. With Michael Caine, James Fox, Sir John Gielgud. Directed by Simon Langton. 1987.

**THE COLOR PURPLE** (Warner) Steven Spielberg's multicolored treatment of Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about a black girl who rises above rural squalor in the South in the early years of this century. With Whoopi Goldberg, Danny Glover, Oprah Winfrey. 1985.

**SHADES OF LOVE** (Karl-Lorimar) Four more new releases in the made-for-video romance series. 1987.

## SUSPENSE

**THE STEPFATHER** (Embassy) A psychopath who's murdered his entire family remarries without revealing his past. Will he strike again? With Terry O'Quinn, Jill Schoelen, Shelley Hack. 1987.

**THE MORNING AFTER** (Karl-Lorimar) Oscar-nominated Jane Fonda plays an alcoholic actress who tries to figure out if she really killed a man. Also with Raul Julia, Jeff Bridges, Diane Salinger. Directed by Sidney Lumet. 1986.

**THE BEDROOM WINDOW** (Vestron) The witness to a crime coaches her lover to be a surrogate witness in the case (to keep her from being implicated), only to have the plan backfire. With Steve Guttenberg, Isabelle Huppert, Elizabeth McGovern. Director: Curtis Hanson. 1987.

## HORROR

**A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 3: DREAM WARRIORS** (Media) Freddy's maniacal offspring put the fright back into summer video. With Craig Wasson. Directed by Chuck Russell. 1987.

## ACTION-ADVENTURE

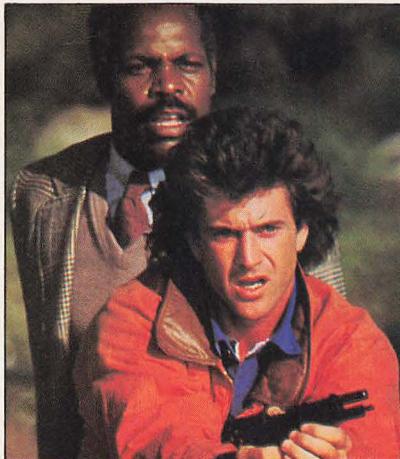
**WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE** (New World) Rutger Hauer takes over the bounty-hunter role originally played on TV by Steve McQueen—updated to the present day. Also with an unmasked Gene Simmons (of Kiss). Directed by Gary Sherman. 1987.

**LETHAL WEAPON** (Warner) Mel Gibson and Danny Glover as cops fighting to stay alive on the Los Angeles drug battlefield. Also with Gary Busey, Darlene Love. Directed by Richard Donner. 1987.

**KING KONG LIVES** (Karl-Lorimar) Jumpin' Jarvik 7s, Batman! A heart transplant brings the big ape back. With Brian Kerwin, Linda Hamilton, Peter Elliot. Director: John Guillerman. 1986.

**HEARTBREAK RIDGE** (Warner) Clint Eastwood leads the Marines into Grenada (invasion, not vacation). Also with Marsha Mason, Moses Gunn, Bo Svenson. Directed by the mayor himself. 1986.

**NO MERCY** (RCA/Columbia) New Orleans' French Quarter and Louisiana's



swamps form the backdrop for this twisty cop-vs.-crimelord actioner. With Richard Gere, Kim Basinger, William Atherton. Directed by Richard Pearce. 1986.

**ALLAN QUATERMAIN AND THE LOST CITY OF GOLD** (Media) H. Rider Haggard's hero (*King Solomon's Mines*) searches for a lost race of Phoenicians. With Richard Chamberlain, Henry Silva, Sharon Stone, James Earl Jones, Robert Donner. Directed by Gary Nelson. 1987.

**SUPERMAN** (Warner) Although details weren't complete at presstime, Warner is planning video tie-ins this summer with the 50th anniversary of *Superman's* creation. Included will be new and rereleases of animated and live-action movies.

## SCI-FI

**SOLAR BABIES** (MGM/UA) A futuristic fable about an extraterrestrial who lands in

Faces new and old (clockwise from top): *Mia Farrow, Barbara Hershey and Oscar winner Dianne Wiest in Woody Allen's Hannah and Her Sisters; Greta Garbo and Robert Taylor in Camille; Danny Glover and Mel Gibson in Lethal Weapon; The Golden Child's Eddie Murphy.*

the middle of an orphanage's roller skateball contest. We kid you not. With Richard Jordan, Jami Gertz, Charles Durning. Directed by Alan Johnson. 1986.

**STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME** (Paramount) Not definite as a summer release, but a possible one. Kirk and company head home to face trial for the destruction of the *Enterprise*. (You didn't think Paramount would let them get away with that one, did you?) With William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, Jane Wyatt, Catherine Hicks. Directed by Mr. Spock. 1986.

## WESTERNS

MGM/UA's Summer Western Roundup includes, for the first time on video, the following titles:

**A FISTFUL OF DYNAMITE** (MGM/UA) The shortened (121 min.) version of Sergio Leone's rip-roaring, Italian-made *Duck, You Sucker* (158 min.), set during a Mexican revolution. With James Coburn, Rod Steiger, Maria Monti. 1972.

**THE UNFORGIVEN** (MGM/UA) John Huston's biting tale of Indian vengeance in 1850s Texas. With Burt Lancaster, Audrey Hepburn, Lillian Gish, Audie Murphy, John Saxon. 1960.

*Continued on page 118*

# THE PUSHER



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## THE STARTLING TRUE CONFessions OF A REMOTE CONTROL JUNKIE

*By Doug Garr*

**F**rankly, what scares me most is worrying about whether he's going to push the button. If he does, it'll be the end of us all!"

The above epigraph could have been uttered by any influential Democrat, circa 1980, about Ronald Reagan, over the big issue of our time: the threat of nuclear war. But it wasn't. It was a matter of much greater concern. The author was describing an all-consuming fear in the increasingly complex world of home entertainment. It came while he was making a pristine, high-grade, commercial-free, standard play copy of *Casablanca*. To appreciate this, you have to imagine Bogie in his climactic scene with Ingrid, gushing about how in this crazy, mixed-up world the problems of three people don't amount to a hill of beans.

Along comes this guy's insignificant other, a pet of the feline persuasion who shall remain anonymous, and with one small step of a size two paw, the furball treads on the remote control, which stops the recording, obliterates the screen, causes groans among the Sunday brunch guests and a look of defeat and consternation that perhaps only the Red Sox's Bill Buckner can identify with.

Yes, folks, life was indeed simpler in the days before remote control, before that ubiquitous word, "digital," before "intelligent" remote, before Control Central, Digital Command, Universal Remote, Learning Remote, SupeRemote or the VT-RM 1450A. I have a recurring dream that ends something like this: Had the pilot of Korean Airlines 007 had the Fisher 120-button remote on board, surely, in an act of quiet desperation, he could have found some button that would have averted his straying into Soviet airspace. It is not the silliest mental departure I've ever had.

Twenty years ago, remote control was a wonderful curiosity and a relatively benign pleasure. Your rich neighbor down the block had a couple of the gizmos, one to open his garage door and the other to operate his spanking new mammoth RCA color console. Manual door opening and channel changing were still mundane chores practiced by you and me, the hoi polloi. You had to have money to push buttons, before remote control became an instrument of the plebians. Now, these little boxes are ne-

cessary to our quotidien lives, as crucial to our well-being as a weekly visit to the therapist. They are powerful tools; their omnipresence has upset whole town councils.

I read a news story not long ago in which a California suburb went bonkers because there were so many garage door remotes bleeping away that you couldn't get decent TV reception. Imagine some family watching Dan Rather on the 7:00 news, and Harry, the next-door neighbor, pulls his BMW into the driveway, and . . . nasty static envelops the screen. They nearly banned the handy slimline critters, when the obvious solution was . . . yet another remote control!

The political aspect of remote control isn't nearly as serious as the social impact. The Electronic Industries Association doesn't keep tabs on the number of remote controls in the US population, mainly because, with the exception of a few products, they are not sold separately, but with TVs, CD players and VCRs. How many remotes are out there, you wonder? Let's say, conservatively, 80 percent of the VCRs come with them, and 80 percent of the TVs, and you easily have more than 100 million remote controls, probably closer to 150 million. Half the population is pushbutton dependent (a softer description than "addicted," which is what I am), and that's not even counting the people who own a CD player, currently our most chic electronic plaything. One of two adult households has at least one remote control. Hah. You know as well as I that there are increasing numbers of three, four and more per home. At last count, I had five. I think.

What will be the long-term consequences of all those infrared rays bouncing off the walls of dens, bedrooms and kitchens across Middle

*Continued on page 120*

# SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

## HOW TO TAPE YOUR KIDS' GAMES LIKE A PRO

*By Deirdre Condon*

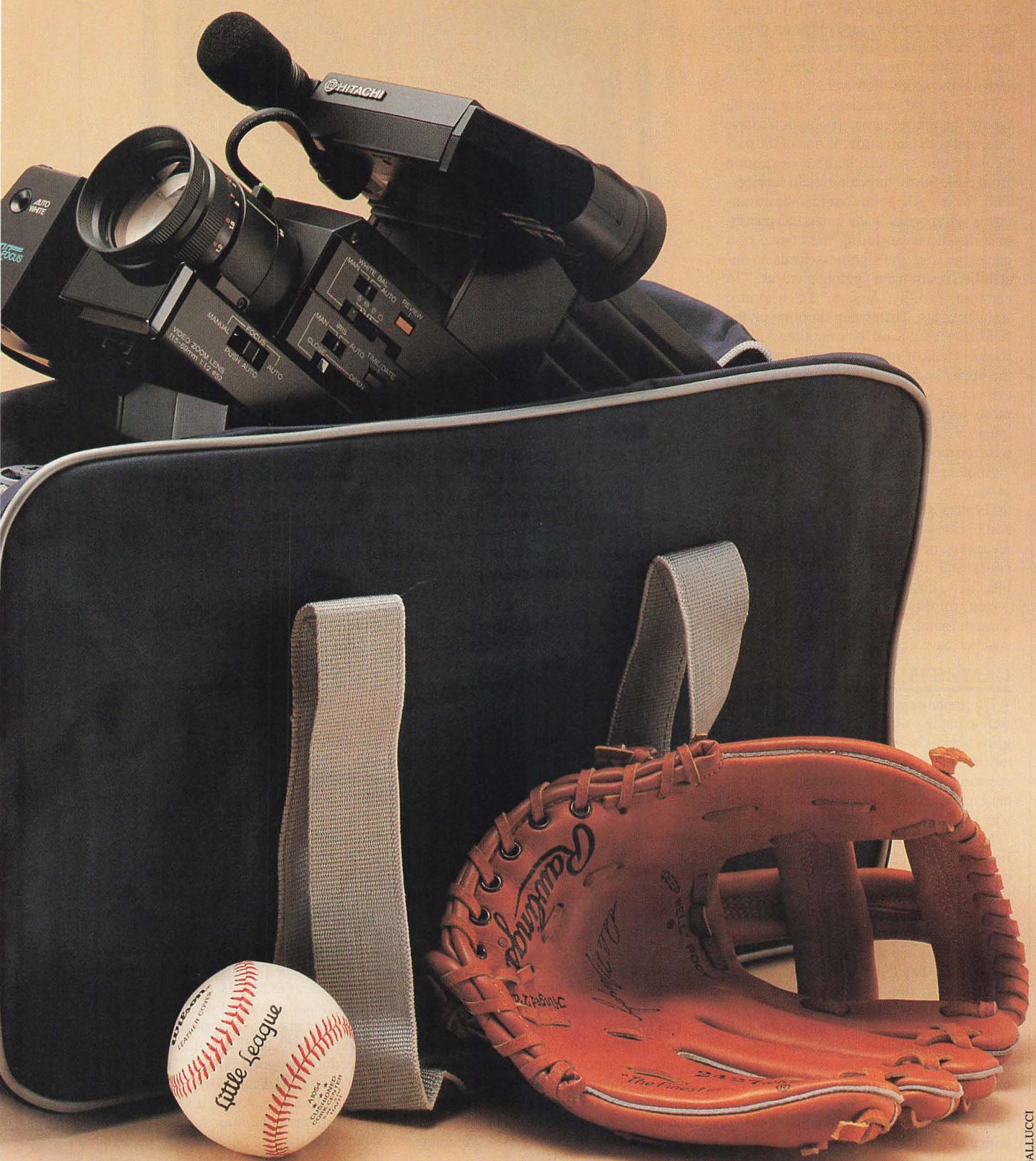
Just listen. It's the crack of the bat, the pop of the glove, the whir of the camcorder. Yes, the true sounds of summer are upon us, and America now has a new favorite sport—recording all those favorite old sports on videotape. Thanks to the wonders of modern technology, you can now quite easily make a permanent and almost professional record of Tommy's first single, Tammy's first home run or Timmy's 90-yard touchdown dash.

Whatever the sport and whatever the age of the participant, all you need to capture golden moments is some good equipment, solid preparation and decent coaching. We'll keep the signals simple. Here's all the coaching you'll need for years of great memories.

All good athletes check over their playing gear before game time. You should do the same. Figure out exactly how many tapes you'll need to cover the event, then pack one extra—just in case. You'll already have your in-camera battery fully charged. Pack a spare, especially if it's cold out. Batteries run down sooner in the cold, and you don't want to miss an exciting ending because of a dead one.

One father who had to fudge the final minutes of a





ED GALLUCCI

game tape shares his remedy: "My battery ran out with three minutes left in the game. My son's soccer team was going to come over to watch the tape. So I edited in some footage from another tape of the ref giving the signal that the game was over. The kids never noticed." You won't be able to fake a last-minute score, however.

Pack a tripod, especially if you plan on taping the entire game. If you don't have one, and your camcorder is one of the particularly light models, here's a suggestion from NFL Films' director of field services, Phil Tuckett. He points out that the advantage of ultraportable camcorders can turn into a disadvantage during the course of a game because the lightness leads to instability, resulting in jiggling pictures. "To add some stability," he says, "I'd customize some weights. Then when shooting on the field, concentrate on the smoothness of the moves. Think of your body as a tripod. Lock the upper body in place: Place your feet, camera, head, shoulders and arms so they move together. The movements can be quick, but they have to be smooth. Otherwise the tape can look like an earthquake."

Another piece of gear to pack in the trunk of your car: a ladder. Every TV sports director I spoke with echoes one word: *elevation*. Just in case you can't get a proper seat in the bleachers, or if you get to a strange field or court and discover that there are no bleachers, have a stepladder ready.

You might not need all this extra paraphernalia, but remember, the best coaches have deep benches.

## GAME TIME

Do pregame and postgame shooting as well as taping the game itself. Before the game begins, be an electronic journalist and tell the viewers, either by picture or by speaking, who is playing what sport, where the game is taking place, what the date is and why the game is significant.

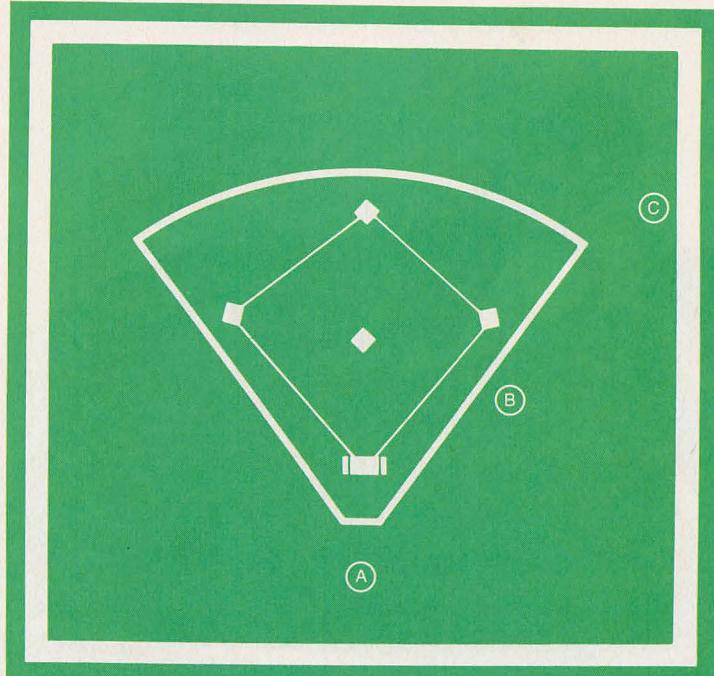
Make sure you show the outside of the field or course. All football fields, tennis courts and golf courses look fundamentally the same once you're there, so do some shots of the outside area—the school, the country club, the park. If you can, get a sign into your shot. These are called establishing shots, and they'll be invaluable in your footage after some time has passed.

At half time or at period breaks, try to get as close to the huddle as the coach will allow. Record reaction, strategy and encouragement. Hopefully, the coach will sound more like Rockne than Knight.

The postgame show can be quick: people filing out of the stands, maybe an interview with your subject about what went right or wrong with the contest. No more than a couple of minutes are needed.

### Some final tips before game time:

- If you're self-conscious about standing by yourself in front of crowds, or feel silly talking to yourself into the mike, enlist an assis-



**BASEBALL CAMERA POSITIONS:** (A) Overall game shot from an elevated position behind home plate. (B) Cutaway shot (to be edited into the footage) from about halfway along the first base line, down near field level. (C) Establishing shot can be from right field, looking in at the field and stands; also a good spot for tight shots of fielders. Baseball's leisurely pace makes it a great video sport.

tant. Two people working together give the impression that the taping is a project rather than an eccentricity. The assistant can do the play-by-play while you concentrate on shooting the game.

- While this tape is important to you, don't turn it into life and death. Don't try to run to first base with your kid. Don't block the view of those who've paid for seats and/or are just as excited about the game as you are. And don't put yourself in danger to get a good shot. Thrown beer cans can hurt.
- Remember, it's only a game. Don't put added pressure on kids to perform better just because you're taping them. Stay in the background.
- Most important, don't get emotionally involved in the event that you're taping. Even professionals can get so wrapped up in the action that they start jumping up and down. The resulting tape is a sportscaster disaster.

The following sport-by-sport breakdown allows you to apply the rules for these popular sports to others that are similar in nature. The assumption here is that you're taping family or friends participating in amateur events, not making technique tapes, which are shot differently (see "Winning with Video," July '85 VR).

If your love is the local pro team, you could run into problems. Most pro organizations prohibit videotaping of the games, though local officials may turn a blind eye. Check all that out before you haul a useless

camcorder to the stadium or course.

Now, let the games begin.

## BASEBALL

The ideal position for capturing the national pastime is directly behind home plate, elevated, of course. "The biggest problem," says Chip Dean, a director at ESPN, "is that no matter where you are, you can't capture the emotion and the skill. The camera has to be set too wide." But if your aim is to tape the whole game, you have little choice.

An important point to remember is that you shouldn't try to keep your camera's eye on the baseball—your home audience won't see anything. Instead, Dean suggests that you keep one eye on the field during the hit and then try to capture the fielders' reactions to the ball as they run in or position themselves at the bases.

As an alternative, or if you're the secondary camera operator, a spot about halfway along the first base line and fairly close to the action is a good choice. You can get some exciting tight shots of the pitcher and the hitter in action. Again, it's better to hold on the pitcher and wait for his reaction rather than try, and fail, to follow the ball.

Baseball is one sport that doesn't need a lot of commentary (usually much less than what TV broadcasts provide). Just set the fielders at the beginning of each half inning, and the batting order, and the count. If your mike can pick up all that from a loud-

speaker, then let that happen and just pick up the crowd sounds. Baseball is characterized by quiet watching and waiting, with sudden bursts of noise and activity. Don't try to change that.

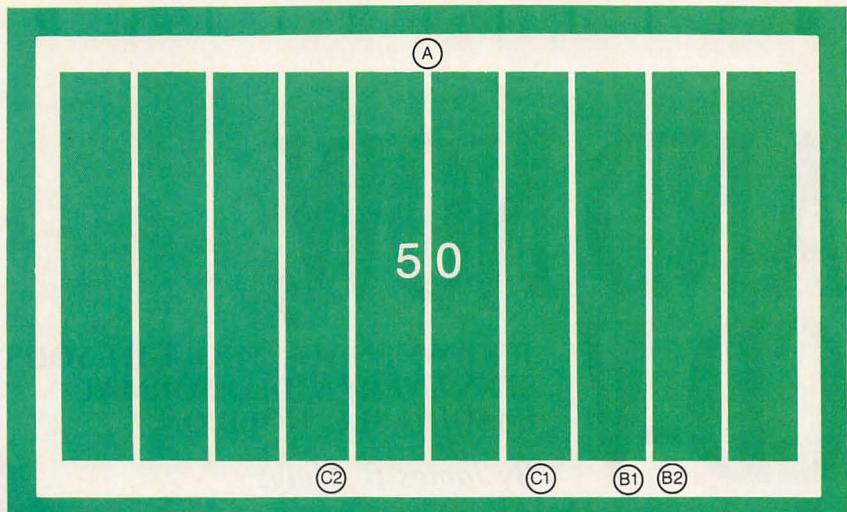
## FOOTBALL, SOCCER AND BASKETBALL

When it comes to preserving pigskin performances for posterity, the 50-yard line is the only place to be. Once you've done all your pregame shooting, set up your gear at the 50, as high up as you can be.

NFL Films' Tuckett suggests a medium range in shooting. That will put a little more than a third of the field in your viewfinder. You can smoothly pan the camera as the game moves across the field, changing the focus only to shoot close-ups of the scoreboard after a score and at the end of each period.

Shooting from the sidelines can give you some exciting moments to cut into your game tape. However, Tuckett warns, "Even professional cinematographers can look like rank amateurs when they first shoot from the sidelines." The game flattens out at eye level, he explains, making it hard to find the ball or see what's really going on. If you want to get Junior breaking through the defensive line, Tuckett says, you'll have to practice for many hours and "expect embarrassing-looking footage at the beginning." Or, as one parent puts it, "You get a lot of shots of ears."

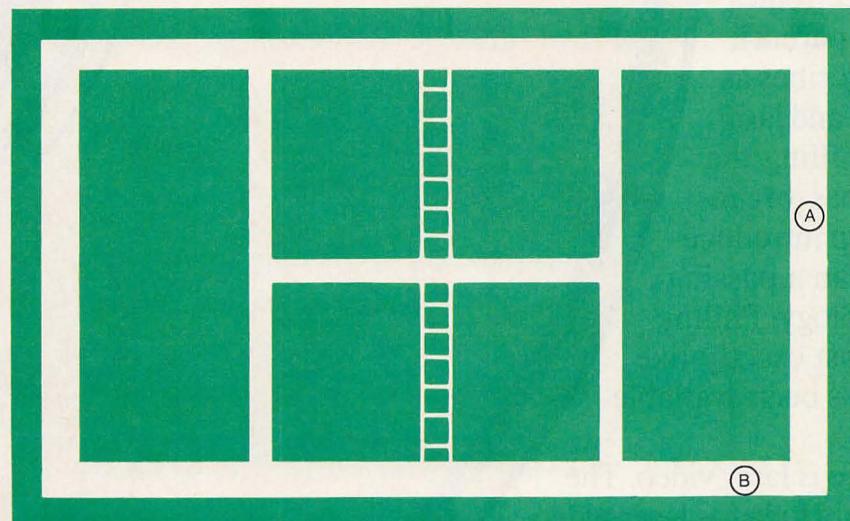
Ambient sound works great: the cheering and chanting become part of the game. For the play-by-play, you can simply talk into the mike or have an assistant do the work for you. But follow the advice of Jim Jennett, a director with ABC Sports: "When



**FIELD-SPORTS CAMERA POSITIONS:** (A) Shoot the overall game from the 50-yard line, as high up as you can be—at the top of the bleachers if possible. For shooting on the sidelines: Stand about even with or behind the defense, if that's your team (B1), or at the scrimmage line or even with the offense (B2). For a field goal attempt, be even with the kicker and stay on him so you get the reaction (C1), or be downfield so you can see the kick and whether it's good or not (C2).

doing commentary, don't say what can clearly be seen on the screen." In other words, don't say, "Number 21 is running down the field." We can see that. Say, "Wide receiver John Smith, number 21, looks as though his running may be hampered by that muscle pull he suffered in the game against archrival Public High."

There's one exception. It's okay to say the score when you show the scoreboard: "At the end of the first quarter, it's Jefferson Wildcats 10, Hamilton Tigers 7. It was a hard-fought 15 minutes of great action."



**TENNIS CAMERA POSITIONS:** (A) Stay on one side of the court for the game. You'll be able to see your subject from all angles, as long as you're up high enough. If there are no stands, try a ladder. (B) For a few technique shots, stand perpendicular to the baseline and keep the camera on the player—don't try to follow the ball.

## TENNIS

Deuce it all, tennis is a great sport for tapers. The advantage is that there's so much action inherent in the game, all the person with the camera has to do is sit there holding it still and he'll seem like an ace when the final tape is played.

The place to be is behind one base line, as high up as you can get—and stay there. Don't change courts with your subject or you'll actually produce a boring tennis tape. Viewers lose the sense of time that changing courts indicates. By staying in the one spot, you'll get to see your subject in all positions. Never try to sit at the net and follow the ball back and forth. Home viewers will sue you for whiplash.

For interesting cutaway shots, move down lower and to one side of your player, but not so low that the net entirely obliterates the opponent. And for a few technique shots, you can be at, but perpendicular to, the base line. Frankly, shots like these should be few and far between.

Ideally, your mike will pick up the umpire's calls, so you won't have to worry about audio. You can whisper into the mike like a golf announcer, if necessary. But what you really want to get are the taps and squeaks of running feet, the bounce of the tennis ball, the zing of the racket—the naturally exciting sounds of tennis.

## GOLF

If you've got the drive to tape a golf game, be prepared to be mobile. You're going to have to set up for the best possible shot three to four times at each hole.

A lot of courses *Continued on page 121*

# AND NOW, CD-V

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU'D  
SEEN EVERY VIDEO FORMAT  
IMAGINABLE, HOLD ON.

By James B. Meigs

**I**magine a video system that uses the same laser technology employed by audio compact disc players to produce crystal clear video pictures—combined with impeccable digital sound—from durable, high-tech videodiscs. Imagine thousands of movies, music video programs, operas and concerts all recorded on disc and able to play back on a machine that can also handle today's audio CDs. And imagine all this high-quality entertainment priced well below most prerecorded videocassettes. Sounds great, right?

It also sounds familiar, very familiar. N.V. Philips, the giant Dutch electronics conglomerate (and Magnavox parent), recently announced what it describes as a new synthesis of digital audio and laser video technology. Philips is calling the new system CD-Video, and has organized a worldwide fanfare to help introduce it. But to anyone with more than a passing acquaintance with video technology, Philips' CD-Video system sounds almost exactly like the laser videodisc system that's been available in the US for almost 10 years.

It's no coincidence—CD-Video is laser video. The eight- and 12-inch videodiscs sold today as laser video are identical to the discs due to arrive under the CD-Video





banner; both the discs and the players will be interchangeable. But the CD-Video concept does offer one important innovation: For the first time, it allows full-motion laser video images to be recorded on five-inch compact discs as well as on traditional videodiscs. Philips' plan includes launching a line of five-inch compact discs—called CD-Vs, of course—that will each include 20 minutes of digital music combined with five minutes of video (also with a digital soundtrack).

Philips hopes that by associating videodiscs with the enormously popular compact disc technology, CD-V will help lift sales of videodisc hardware and software out of their current doldrums. The company also sees the five-inch CD-V concept as a new music format that, by combining the excitement of music video with a small number of musical selections on each disc, will become the digital equivalent of the 45 rpm record—perfect for teenagers.

*Continued on page 122*

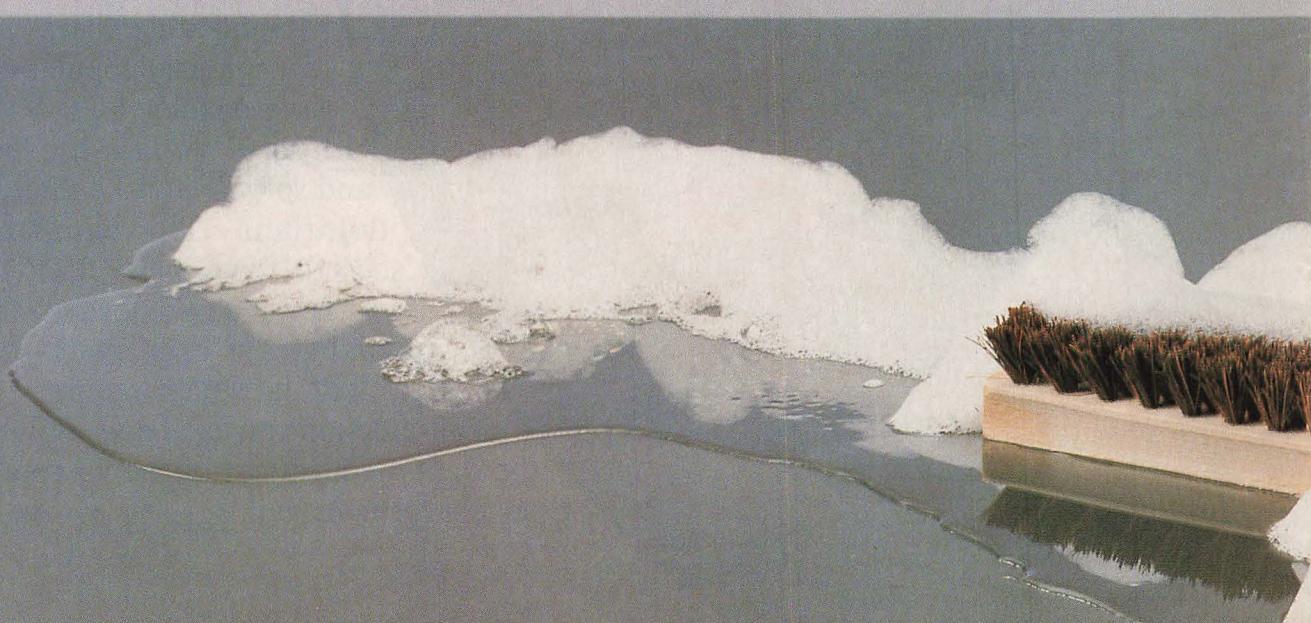
# COMING CLEAN

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW  
ABOUT VIDEO HEAD CLEANERS.

By *Gregory P. Fagan*

**K**eeping the heads of 40 million American VCRs clean and contamination-free promises to be a central area of debate during the 1988 presidential campaign. And a complex issue it is. While Star Wars, Contra funding and statehood for John Candy lend themselves to simple pro/con discussions, the video head cleaning nexus requires candidates to familiarize themselves with no less than six distinctively convincing arguments.

The largest camp in the battle, the silent majority, maintains that VCR owners do not need to clean their deck's heads. Hard-line conservative videophiles, many of them second generation audiophiles, insist that proper cleaning consists of removing the machine's outer





shell and swabbing the mechanism with a liquid cleanser. The other four factions, each represented by persuasive spokespersons, recommend using cleaning systems that resemble videocassettes. Once inserted, these systems bring brushes—or wet/rinsing fibers, or dry/abrasive fibers, or specially treated magnetic tape—into contact with the tape heads.

"And with whom," you may ask, "should the consumer side in this intense debate?" Like defining the parameters of a nuclear defense policy, making informed decisions on the head cleaning issue necessitates a review of the facts.

Video heads accumulate dirt. At times, this nasty tendency toward the untidy completely obfuscates all of the nice things that tape heads do. If your video image suddenly turns into a morass of white streaks, black lines and gray snow, it's probably time to clean the heads. One look at a video head would help you to understand why such accumulations occur.

The head gap, the opening in the head through which the video information actually passes, measures a slim  $\frac{1}{2}$  micron across. In case you left your micron-to-understandable-term conversion chart in your other pants, 150 head gaps equal one human hair. Or, one head gap equals  $\frac{1}{150}$  of a hair. But enough splitting hairs—it clearly takes very little to clog such a small opening.

The video head that houses this gap consumes a comparatively large amount of space, though only the tip of it protrudes through the outer surface of the head drum. In fact, by peering through the cassette slot of your machine at that polished chromelike cylinder known as the head drum, you may inspect the protruding video head. (Actually heads: two, three, four or more appear at equally spaced intervals around the drum's perimeter, depending upon the sophistication of the VCR.)

After going through the trouble of examining the heads, you'll recognize that the VCR's casing performs a staunch task of dust protection. But, the pernicious particles that commonly clog your video heads usually arrive there courtesy of low-grade or overused rental cassettes.

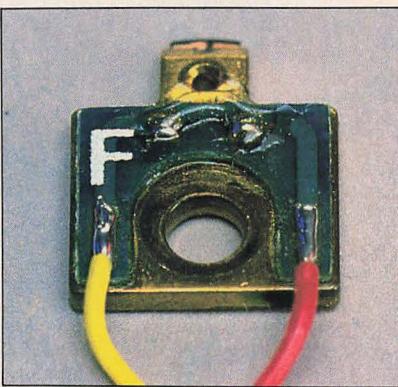
To read the information from a magnetic videotape, the head needs to project out and into the surface of the videotape: much like a baker finger-testing cakes in an oven. Manufacturers coat the polyester surface of a videotape with magnetic particles. On low-quality videocassettes, the binding agent that holds the particles to the tape may gradually wear off from the tape head's gentle prodding. Frequently viewed rental tapes can foul up your machine with a frightening variety of you-don't-know-where-it's-been contaminants. (If you were two years old, wouldn't you want to know if your jelly sandwich could fit into the cassette slot?)

Once dirt builds up on your machine's heads—distorting the video or audio

playback of the deck—you must decide which candidate you trust the most. Moving from the ideological right to the left, we approach the swab-and-solution method. A number of companies, including Recoton, Gemini and Simple-Tech, distribute packages that include long-stemmed swabs (either foam or chamois) and some form of alcohol solution. While this works well, the mechanics involved prove too cumbersome for the average consumer. A thorough head swabbing usually entails removing the



A cutaway view (above) of a two-head drum. Out of its drum and magnified, an actual video head assembly (below).



VCR's outer shell (voiding the manufacturer's warranty), locating the head drum, isolating the head, neatly meting out a few drops of cleanser and then carefully brushing away the contaminants.

While this unwieldy method appeals to hands-on videophiles, most VCR owners prefer simplicity. Looking for the easy way out often leads voters (consumers) into a distorted quandary of rhetoric. The dirtiest buzzword in head cleaning is "abrasive." Every head cleaner abrades: But so, too, does every videotape. Paul Perez, marketing manager of Recoton, points out, "you can't wash a car simply by running water over it."

Even so, word got out that dry-abrasive systems, which threaded metal oxide tapes through the VCR's mechanism, cut into video heads like sandpaper on glass. Not a pretty thought, and one that caused most dry systems to vanish faster than deep-cuffed bell-bottom pants. A few manufacturers still produce dry systems *without* metal oxides that, according to George Haight,

Discwasher's director of marketing, "you can go ahead and use once a week." He describes the company's dry system (Discwasher also makes a wet one) as "a conventional mylar videotape with a one-inch embossed grid set in every six inches."

Which brings us to the "if it ain't broke . . ." school of head care. All high-grade videocassettes include a small amount of detergent in their formulation. If you use superior tapes exclusively—and keep your VCR covered when not in use, and ban smoking in your house, and essentially convert your media room into an intensive care unit—then maybe you can avoid head contamination. Otherwise, expect to encounter a situation in which just running a good tape through the deck will not suffice.

Scientists at 3M reached a technological compromise in the mid-'70s when they devised a magnetic head cleaning videotape (HCV). "Ours is the only magnetic-based system available," states John V. Nowicki, 3M's marketing manager for system care products. "And VCR mechanisms are designed to run with magnetic tape, period." The 3M cleaner runs in your machine just as any normal tape does, but on-screen and audio signals tell you when the heads are clean. Like the aforementioned high-grade tapes, the 3M HCV formulation includes head cleaning agents—only at a much higher level than on recording cassettes.

Nowicki also counsels against wet systems that clean the entire tape path. "Nearly every one of these systems brings a corrosive detergent into contact with the plasticized parts of the VCR," claims Nowicki, "and corrosives can deteriorate the pinch roller." In response, wet system supporters such as Perez assert that "there are safe solvents, and any well-engineered cleaning system is designed with all of the machine's delicate inner parts in mind."

The most recent hat in the head cleaning ring comes from an Ireland-based company known as Amaray. The Amaray Trackmate System uses a wide, multifibered brush to clean the head, and a felt pad to brush off the capstan. A special applicator pen (designed by Berol) metes out measured amounts of cleaning fluid into the cassette. When asked if the fibers might endanger the fragile heads, Mark Dill, Amaray's vice president, said, "Not with these brushes."

Joe Fritsch, Amaray's CEO and designer of the Trackmate, assures that its "over 19,000 woven elements are fully weld-sealed [and] as safe as they are effective." Fritsch punctuates the topicality of this debate when he points out, "The technology wasn't even available to make these three years ago."

The most visible, and numerous, candidates in the field advocate the wet and wet/dry formats. These cassette cartridges house fiber ribbons which, when moistened with an alcohol or Freon derivative, run through the entire *Continued on page 126*

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# MICHAEL NESMITH

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## HEY, HEY, HE'S MUCH MORE THAN A MONKEE—A BARRELFUL MORE

---

**M**ichael Nesmith brings to mind Sally Field, Richard Chamberlain, even Wayne Newton. They all became culture jokes in the '60s (Nesmith by association with the Monkees), only to reemerge in the '80s as serious pliers of their crafts.

Nesmith would probably be the least likely to admit to any bitterness or embarrassment over his public past. He claims to be completely at ease with his early days as a network-created rocker and clown. And why not? His recent achievements, though not as indelibly etched in pop history, are much more interesting and have gained him the reputation as a media visionary. He's written songs for Linda Ronstadt and others, and made 12 solo albums. He produced *Repo Man*, *Timerider* and *Square Dance*. And then there's Pacific Arts, the home video company he founded, and *Elephant Parts* and *Dr. Duck's Super Secret All-Purpose Sauce*, the videos he produced and starred in.

Though he eschews the "visionary" label as a public relations invention, it's clear he likes being cast in that role. In a recent conversation with *VR*'s Marc Berman, he talked about the future of video and the demise of the printed word.

**VR:** *Elephant Parts* was your first home video production. How do you think it holds up?

**NESMITH:** It's pretty dated. It has a kind of first film look about it. It's like a first child—you love it and you laugh and it's funny, but by today's standards...

**VR:** Where do you think home video is going?

**NESMITH:** That's a hard question. The legitimate answer is I don't know where home video is going, and neither does anybody else. But I do think home video is going to become more of a vehicle for original programs, and they're going

to center more and more around music and comedy.

I also happen to see a whole area of home video opening up. The third wave. The first was time-shifting. The second was renting movies. And now the third wave becomes more original programs, self-help and periodicals—where the VCR comes into its own.

**VR:** Ten or 20 years from now, what will the home video industry look like?

**NESMITH:** Ten or 20 years from now, the home video industry, in its current form,

*Continued on page 128*

# Why you might consider investing \$6,000 in a Fisher audio-video system.

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Fisher video-tech MK-20 also available with 40" rear projection stereo television at \$7,000. Retail price may vary. Products are subject to change without notice. TV picture simulated.

## Advanced Product Evaluation Lab Delivers The Verdict On 14 VHS-C Tapes



Everybody seems to be buying a camcorder these days, and it's an inescapable fact of life that no matter how nifty your camcorder is, how many features it's got, how great the camera quality is, it don't mean a thing if you ain't got the right tape. One of the four formats is VHS-C, and the VHS-C tape is basically a length of VHS tape in a smaller cassette shell—one that requires a cassette adapter for playback on a normal VHS deck. Last year, we tested tapes in another compact format, 8mm; this year we turn to VHS-C.

There are not nearly as many versions of VHS-C tapes as there are of standard VHS tapes (which we'll be testing in our next issue), but some of the manufacturers offer them in more than one grade. Identified as a TC-20 cassette, VHS-C tapes record for 20 minutes at the SP speed. A number of VHS-C camcorders offer the slower, EP speed, which allows for a full hour of recording and playback time.

Since the tape used in VHS-C cassettes is essentially the same format as VHS, a VHS-C tape test could very well reveal old wine in new bottles. This was not the case in the VHS-C tape test conducted by the Advanced Product Evaluation Lab (APEL). Test results showed that the VHS-C tapes don't generally suffer from the same problems we found in many of the high-grade VHS tapes we tested last year. Indeed, the

overall good results this test yielded suggest to us that the major tape manufacturers have gotten over the quality control problems responsible for the poor showings of some brands last year. And good for them.

APEL tested 14 tapes from 11 manufacturers. Three samples of each tape were tested. In order to simulate the parameters of a normal test of half-inch tape, three JVC cassette adapters, which allow the TC-20 cassette to be played in a standard VHS VCR, enabled APEL to use its industrial-grade cassette recorders (Panasonic's AG-6200 and NV-8200). One cassette adapter was used for "exercising" the cassette samples, one for making the test recordings and one for playing back the tapes. All of the samples were subjected to the same adapter in each mode.

A complete listing of the test results appears in a chart at the end of the report. In several cases, manufacturers sent the lab samples that were from the same production batch. This could have the effect of skewing the test results one way or the other. In these cases, we report this in the individual evaluations of the tapes and mark the tape with an asterisk on the chart. This should serve as a caveat emptor for that tape, since the test results from samples taken from the same production lot are likely to be more consistent, for better or worse, than the results APEL got from samples taken

from different production lots. But test results were so generally consistent that this consideration isn't crucial.

### Testing the Tapes

All samples were tested for video and audio performance. Since no VHS-C camcorders offer VHS Hi-Fi audio recording capability, we confined audio tests to conventional, or edge-track, recording and playback. APEL measured six major video performance characteristics: luminance (brightness), signal-to-noise ratio, chroma signal-to-noise ratio, dropouts, video frequency response and signal loss after repeated plays.

### Video S/N Ratios

To measure luminance, or brightness signal-to-noise ratios, APEL recorded a reference gray level of 50 IRE units. Each tape was then played back and the unweighted noise was measured over a bandwidth extending from 10 kHz to 4.2 MHz without the chrominance (color) trap at 3.58 MHz.

For the chroma signal-to-noise ratio, APEL used a test color field of red corresponding to the colors of a 75%-amplitude color bars pattern. Amplitude modulation (AM) and phase modulation (PM) chroma noise were measured over a bandwidth that extended from 100 Hz to 500 kHz.

## Video Frequency Response

Video frequency response is directly related to picture detail and resolution. The more uniform the response, and the higher the frequency to which it extends, the sharper and more detailed the picture you will be able to record and play back (assuming that your VCR's own frequency response is as good as or better than that of the tape you use). To measure this important characteristic, APEL used a multiburst test signal consisting of five bursts at frequencies of 0.5 MHz, 1.25 MHz, 2.0 MHz, 3.0 MHz and 3.58 MHz. (The color burst signal normally associated with this group of test signals was removed in order to prevent the activation of the color circuitry of the VCR. When activated, this circuitry removes all frequencies above 3.58 MHz.)

### Dropouts

Perhaps the most important characteristic relating to videotape performance is the dropout count, a measure of how often particles of tape flake off, taking a bit of signal with them. Dropouts cause brief bursts of video noise on your TV screen when you play back your tapes. Dropouts of short duration can be mistaken for noise, but, in fact, they represent imperfections in the tape where the video signal is substantially lowered in amplitude. Dropouts of 15 microseconds or more show up as visible and annoying horizontal streaks in a picture during tape playback.

Dropouts were measured at three different locations on each tape. Generally, there is a higher dropout count near the beginning and end of a tape, while the lowest count should occur near the center. Most experienced users of tape fast-forward the first minute or so of any tape, and avoid recording onto the last minute or two of tape. In our tests, a gray field of 50 IRE units was recorded at each section of the tape for one minute. The tape was played back and any signal reduction of 20 dB or more was counted as a dropout. Duration of the dropout was measured, and dropouts were divided into short (five microseconds) and long (15 microseconds or more) categories.

### Signal Retention

Tapes begin to lose some of their signal with repeated plays. Obviously, if you plan on recording an event or a program that you'd like to play over and over and preserve for a long time, you will want to choose a tape that exhibits a low signal loss. In our measurements, each recorded cassette was played back 10 times, and the percentage of RF signal loss was measured.

### Audio Tests

One of the most important qualities of any audio recording is uniform frequency response or audio bandwidth. Because of the very narrow track and the slow

longitudinal speed of videotape, its audio frequency response cannot be expected to be as good as that of even an inexpensive audiocassette used in a relatively low-end deck. Nevertheless, some of the tapes tested exhibited somewhat better audio frequency response than did others. Dropouts can affect audio performance just as they can affect video performance. Since the audio track is positioned near the edge of the tape, audio dropouts can often be more serious than video dropouts if the coating of magnetic particles is not uniform out to the very edge of the tape. In our tests of audio performance, APEL determined a nominal 0 dB reference level by recording a 1 kHz signal that, when played back, produced 3% total harmonic distortion. The audio signal level available under those conditions was noted and APEL made other measurements against that reference level.

### THD

Total harmonic distortion was measured using a 1 kHz signal at a level of 10 dB below the reference level. The lower the percentage, the better the tape. All of the tapes exhibited THD figures of well below .5% under these test conditions, but there was still a fair degree of variation between them, with Memorex PRO HG exhibiting the lowest average THD (.17%) and JVC SPRO averaging the highest THD (.28%).

### Audio S/N Ratio

Measuring the audio signal-to-noise ratio first involves making a recording with the inputs to the VCR shorted. The tape is then played back through an A-weighting network, and the level of noise measured is expressed as a number of dB lower than the reference level established earlier. The higher the dB, the better the signal-to-noise ratio. All of the tapes did quite well—better, in fact, than the capability of most VHS-C camcorders. In other words, with any of these tapes, audio signal-to-noise ratio is more likely to be limited by your camcorder rather than by the tape itself.

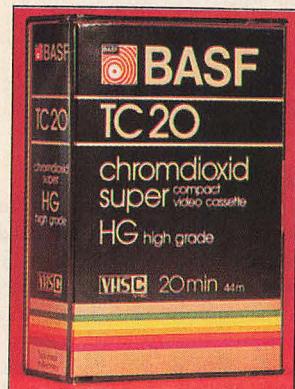
### Uniformity

Audio uniformity measures the tape's ability to reproduce a steady-state audio tone (of 1 kHz) recorded at a constant amplitude for a period of three minutes, on both stereo channels. Variations in output level between the two tracks is often a sign of damage to the edge of the tape. Of course, no VHS-C camcorders now offer stereo, but this measurement is still an important indicator of manufacturing quality.

### The Bottom Line

Our tests, in general, show that all of the tapes measured are much closer to each other in overall performance than were the larger-cassette, half-inch tapes we have tested in the past. A tape with low dropout rates will improve both video and audio per-

formance. All of the tape manufacturers represented here seem to be turning out tapes that are more uniform than they were in the past as far as video and audio performance is concerned. However, dropout counts are still quite unpredictable. In fact, in many cases one or two of our samples exhibited a very low dropout count, while the third, taken from a different batch, had a high dropout count. Thus, the average reported in our charts may have been thrown off. Where this happened it's mentioned in the commentary accompanying that tape.



### BASF HG

These were good tapes with adequately low dropout counts near the center. In fact, one of the three samples exhibited a low count even near the ends of the tape. Video frequency response was among the most uniform, and signal loss with repeated plays was better than average. While audio bandwidth and distortion were not among the best of the group, audio signal-to-noise ratio was above average. So was audio uniformity.



### FUJI SHG

This tape had one of the best center- and end-section dropout counts. It would have done even better, as far as starting dropouts were concerned, were it not for one sample which exhibited a rather high dropout count at the beginning of the tape. The luminance signal-to-noise ratio of this tape was superb. The audio signal-to-noise ratio

was above average, as was audio bandwidth. All samples of this tape were drawn from the same production lot.



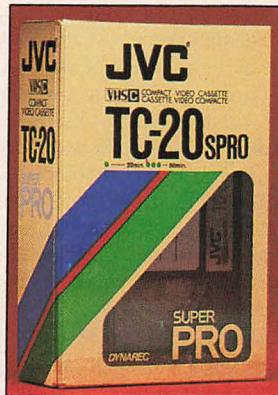
### JVC HGS

We were quite surprised to find that the inventors of the VHS-C format did not fare tremendously with this tape. Luminance S/N was below average, as was the audio signal-to-noise ratio. In all other respects, however, the tape was average. It's important to remember, though, that a difference of 1 or 2 dB isn't that great, especially considering the capabilities of most camcorders. Dropout count near the end of the tape was very low for all three samples, suggesting that this tape can be used up to its very last few inches. Audio bandwidth and uniformity were about average, too.



### JVC SHG MASTER

If this tape is supposed to be superior to the JVC HGS, it certainly didn't turn out that way as far as dropout counts were concerned. Still, like almost all the other tapes tested, this is a good tape. It will certainly deliver more than acceptable results. Luminance and chroma signal-to-noise ratio were both better than that measured for the JVC HGS, and both audio bandwidth and signal-to-noise ratio showed considerable improvement over the HGS type. Audio frequency response, in fact, was the second best of all the tapes measured (sharing that honor with Minolta's SHG tape), extending out to 11.8 kHz.



### JVC SPRO

Once again, the dropout counts for this tape were disappointing; higher, in fact, than the count for either of the other two types of JVC tapes tested. This may be due to the fact that all three samples were from the same production batch. However, video signal-to-noise was the best of all three types of JVC tapes, as was the audio signal-to-noise ratio. While none of the tapes tested exhibited severe signal loss with repeated plays, these JVC samples were the poorest in this regard, averaging .6 dB signal loss for 10 plays.



### MAGNAVOX STD

Considering that this Magnavox tape is a standard grade, it did remarkably well in our tests. While video signal-to-noise was not as outstanding as that of some of the higher grade tapes, it was high enough not to be a limiting factor when used with most VHS-C camcorders we have tested. Furthermore, center and end dropout counts were a bit lower than average and one of the three samples tested had very low dropout counts even at the start of the tape. Signal loss was minimal and well below the average of the tapes measured.

### MAXELL HGX GOLD

Better than average video signal-to-noise ratio, but only an average dropout rate with no signal loss after repeated plays is the way we would describe these tape samples, if not

## COMING NEXT MONTH

### WORLD EXCLUSIVE! FIRST LAB TEST OF THE MOST REVOLUTIONARY VIDEO PRODUCT SINCE HI-FI!

The July issue of *Video Review* promises to be spectacular with a special test of a product so important, it almost defies description. If you're a video enthusiast (or simply love to see great picture quality) this is the story for you.

### PLUS A COMPLETE VHS BLANK TAPE TEST

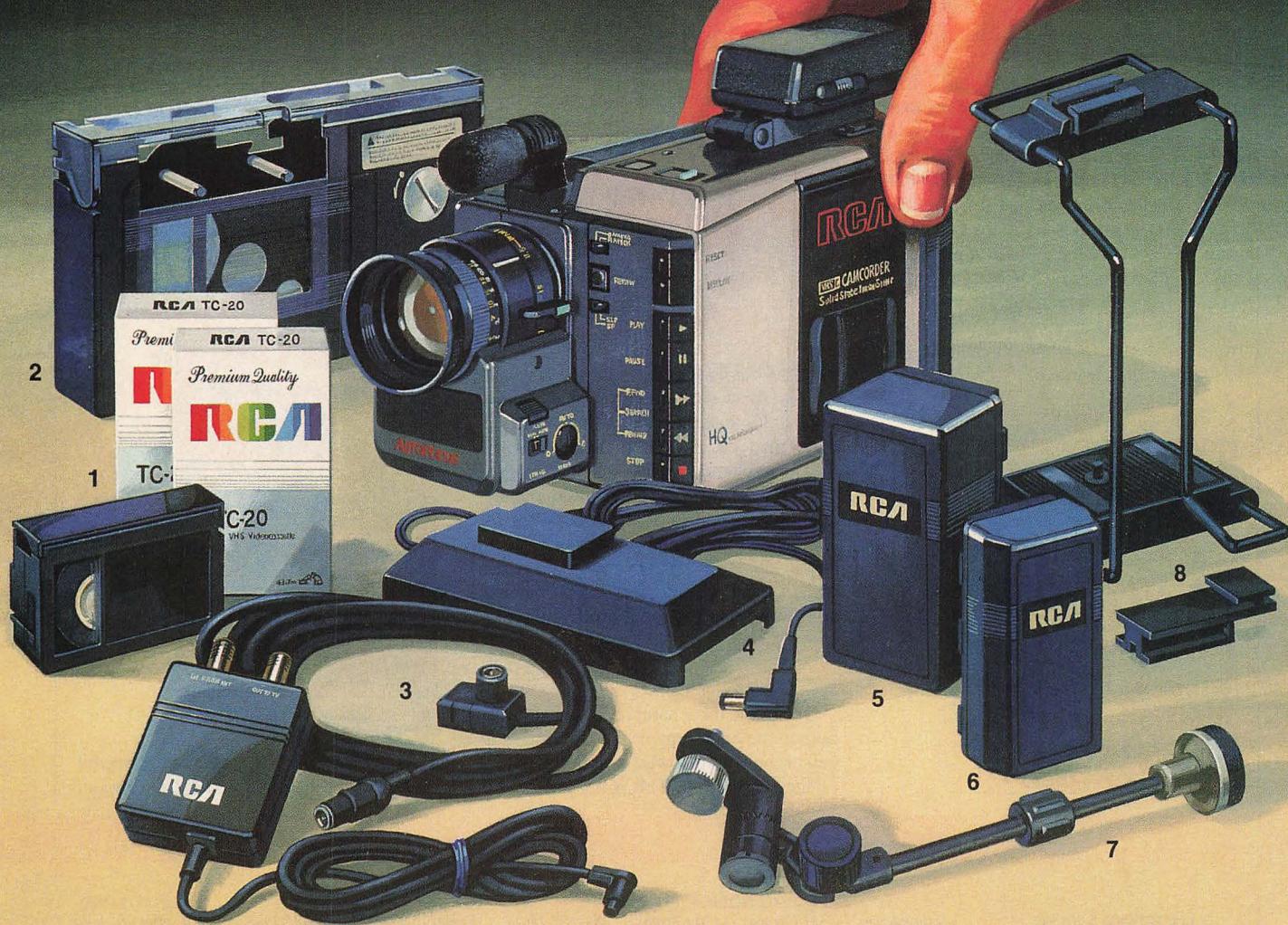
Also in July, Advanced Product Evaluation Lab and technical editor Len Feldman report on almost every grade and brand of VHS tape available. It's an absolute must-read for anyone planning to buy blank tape.

### ALSO FEATURING...

In July, we'll also highlight a critic's choice of the top science-fiction videos, an interview with comedian John Candy, as well as the most complete reviews of new tapes and discs by the finest lineup of critics anywhere.

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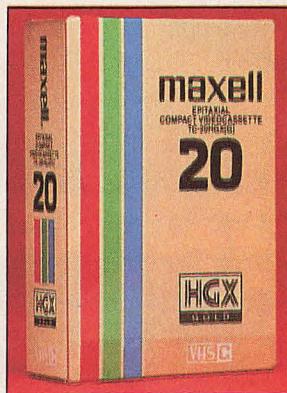
# Welcome to the wonderful world of Small Wonder® video accessories.



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RCA has introduced its new generation of VHS-C video accessories for the handy new RCA Small Wonder camcorder (CPR100). Compact and lightweight, each provides an exciting new dimension to make your home videos even more professional. So get in on the start of something big by visiting your nearest RCA video dealer. Or to learn more, write: RCA Distributor and Special Products Division, Deptford, NJ 08096-2088. Attn: Sales Promotion Services.

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for one thing. Unfortunately, one of the three samples showed a very high dropout count at the beginning of the tape (some 131 long-term dropouts per minute), which pulled the average start-of-tape dropout count way up. All three tape samples were from the same lot. Video frequency response was excellent, as was audio signal-to-noise. Surprisingly, however, audio frequency response was among the poorest of the tapes tested, extending only to 10.3 kHz. Audio distortion, on the other hand, was also lower than average.



## MEMOREX PRO HG

This tape exhibited a poorer video signal-to-noise ratio than we would have expected from a videotape that bills itself as "Pro." Dropout count, however, was about average, and video frequency response was excellent. Audio performance was outstanding, with almost the lowest harmonic distortion of all the tapes tested.

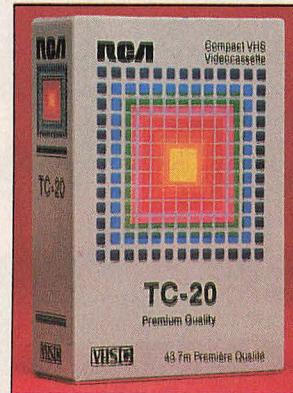


## MINOLTA SHG

This tape was slightly lower than average as far as luminance signal-to-noise ratio was concerned, but did well in the chroma S/N measurements and had a lower-than-average center-of-tape dropout count. Audio output level was the lowest of all the tapes tested, but far more important was the superb audio bandwidth, or frequency response, which tied with JVC's SHG Master. This batch of tapes was from the same production lot.

## RCA STD

One of the three samples tested showed, both at the beginning of the tape and at its center, one of the lowest dropout counts of all the tapes tested. This is not reflected in



the summary chart because the other two samples didn't do nearly as well. In all other respects, however, there was a great deal of consistency among the three samples tested. A false consistency, perhaps, since all the samples were from the same production lot. Audio signal-to-noise ratio was about average, but audio bandwidth was among the poorest of all the tapes tested.



## SCOTCH EXG

Scotch's only VHS-C tape was a wee bit higher in the beginning and end dropout

## V H S - C T A P E S

TAPE BRAND & TYPE	Luminance	SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIOS		Start (5/15uS)	DROPOUTS Center (5/15uS)	End (5/15uS)	SIGNAL LOSS (dB, after 10 plays)
		AM Chroma	PM Chroma				
<b>BASF HG</b>	47.8	47.3	40.1	25/19	9/3	13/9	.2
<b>FUJI SHG*</b>	49.0	47.6	40.1	37/28	5/2	6/4	.5
<b>JVC HGS</b>	46.3	45.6	39.9	26/19	14/9	6/4	.3
<b>JVC SHG MASTER</b>	47.5	46.3	40.0	20/13	17/13	10/3	.4
<b>JVC SPRO*</b>	48.4	46.6	40.1	24/14	28/20	20/13	.6
<b>MAGNAVOX STD</b>	46.1	45.2	39.6	21/15	11/8	7/4	.2
<b>MAXELL HGX GOLD*</b>	48.0	47.5	40.3	76/59	11/7	22/11	.0
<b>MEMOREX PRO HG</b>	45.8	45.3	39.7	24/16	10/6	23/15	.3
<b>MINOLTA SHG*</b>	47.1	46.3	40.0	14/10	9/7	15/12	.2
<b>RCA STD*</b>	47.6	46.0	40.2	22/18	11/6	12/19	.1
<b>SCOTCH EXG*</b>	48.6	48.0	40.6	27/23	6/4	22/18	.3
<b>TDK EHG</b>	48.3	47.6	40.0	30/23	4/3	13/10	.3
<b>TDK HDX PRO</b>	49.2	47.5	40.1	15/12	2/2	1/0	.5
<b>ZENITH SHG</b>	48.6	47.7	40.1	10/8	7/5	2/2	.5

All tapes measured were TC-20. \*All samples drawn from the same production lot.

counts than we would have liked. Still, signal-to-noise ratios were high all around—the audio S/N ratio was 53.5 dB, the highest tested. AM chroma, at 48 dB, was also the highest tested. A good tape with a nice picture overall, but for best results, skip ahead a little.



### TDK EHG

Our experience with full-size, half-inch TDK VHS tapes bearing this designation was a disappointing one the last time we tested this grade. Happily, quality control seems to have returned with the VHS-C versions of the tape. Video signal-to-noise ratios were among the best, center-section dropouts were very low, video frequency response was good and audio performance was generally above average. What's more, there was excellent consistency between the three samples supplied, which were from two different production lots, indicating excellent factory quality control.

### TDK HDX PRO

Center-section dropout counts were among the lowest of all the tapes tested, as



were dropout counts at the end of these tapes. Luminance signal-to-noise ratio was the best of all the tapes measured—almost too good—and audio performance was superb. Audio bandwidth was the best of all the tapes tested, extending response to 12.4 kHz for the -3 dB roll-off point.



### ZENITH SHG

A better than average dropout count, above-average video signal-to-noise ratios and reasonably good audio performance make this a tape worth looking into. We

don't know who is making this tape for Zenith (the company doesn't actually manufacture tape), but whoever is supplying the tape is obviously responding to the demands of Zenith's own quality control department. Dropout counts at all sections of these tapes were extremely low. One of the samples tested actually had fewer dropouts near the start and end of the tape than it had at the center.

### The Last Word

One noteworthy item regarding this test: There's been a lot of talk about how sturdy VHS-C cassettes are. People seem to look askance at anything that requires an adapter for use, as the VHS-C cassette does. One category we test is mechanical noise; clicks, rattles, squeals and the like generally indicate a badly constructed cassette. So why aren't the results of that test in the chart? Because none of the tapes exhibited any mechanical noise whatsoever—an encouraging sign regarding the durability of a VHS-C cassette. —Len Feldman

### ABOUT THESE TEST REPORTS

Each piece of video equipment we test is a factory-fresh production model—the same quality as you would buy in a store. After each product has been tested by APEL—Advanced Product Evaluation Lab, a leading independent testing facility headed by engineer Frank Barr—it goes to technical editor Len Feldman, an internationally recognized authority with more than 20 years' experience testing home entertainment products. He interprets the data and performs hands-on use tests of each piece of equipment, combining personal, practical experience with the most objective technical data available anywhere.

FREQUENCY RESPONSE (dB at .5/1.25/2/3/3.58 MHz)	AUDIO OUTPUT at 3% THD (Volts)	THD at -20 dB (%)	S/N RATIO, A-WEIGHTED (dB)	AUDIO UNIFORMITY (Deviation, dB, L/R)	AUDIO BANDWIDTH (Hz to kHz, -3dB)	SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE
.0/2.3/.6/-2/.4	.90	.26	52.5	.1/.2	43.8/10.1	<b>\$9.99</b>
.0/2.1/.5/-9/-3	.88	.23	53.4	.1/.5	43.2/11.6	<b>\$10.59</b>
.0/2.3/.9/-3/.3	.97	.27	49.6	.1/.3	43.2/11.1	<b>\$5.85</b>
.0/2.1/.2/-1.0/-3	.79	.25	51.6	.1/.2	43.9/11.8	<b>\$6.50</b>
.0/2.1/.6/-2/.3	.88	.28	52.9	.1/.3	43.9/11.5	<b>\$8.60</b>
.0/2.4/1.0/-2/.6	.99	.23	50.1	.2/.4	43.8/10.8	<b>\$8.20</b>
.0/2.4/.6/2/.9	1.06	.18	53.8	.1/.5	43.8/10.3	<b>\$9.99</b>
.0/2.3/.8/.3/.2	.98	.17	49.7	.2/.6	43.2/11.0	<b>\$7.99</b>
.0/2.0/-3/1.3/-1.1	.76	.25	51.2	.1/.2	43.9/11.8	<b>\$8.50</b>
.0/2.5/1.2/.5/1.3	1.09	.22	52.3	.1/.3	43.8/10.1	<b>\$8.95</b>
.0/2.1/.4/-1.0/-5	.89	.20	53.5	.2/.5	43.2/11.5	<b>\$9.99</b>
.0/2.0/.1/-1.1/-1	.89	.15	52.3	.1/.6	43.1/11.2	<b>\$10.99</b>
.0/2.0/.2/-1.4/-7	.80	.19	53.3	.1/.2	42.6/12.4	<b>\$12.99</b>
.0/2.1/.3/-1.4/-9	.84	.19	52.7	.1/.2	43.2/11.6	<b>\$8.10</b>

## A First From Zenith: The VM7100, VHS Hi-Fi Camcorder



Zenith's VM7100 camcorder, a VHS model with the requisite HQ picture improvement circuitry, is a classic good news/bad news camcorder. The good news is that this is the first camcorder to incorporate VHS Hi-Fi audio recording. The bad news is that the VM7100 is the closest thing to an ergonomic disaster we've seen in some time. It's not so bad once you get used to it, but boy, does it take getting used to.

The situation becomes more bearable once you realize that the camcorder was designed in a kind of inside-out way. Its first function, according to Zenith, is as a full-feature VCR. The camcorder function comes second. This is unlike the way camcorders are normally designed, which is with the camera/recording capabilities emphasized and made as easy to use as possible.

What's the advantage of a VHS Hi-Fi camcorder? Well, as *Video Review*'s lab tests of equipment have shown time and time again, for sheer audio quality, the VHS Hi-Fi recording method blows conventional linear-track recording out of the water. Frequency response, signal-to-noise ratio, dynamic range—all these important audio specifications are well served by the VHS Hi-Fi method, which records sound across the whole half-inch of VHS tape, as op-

posed to the thin strip of the tape used for linear audio recording. (The 8mm equivalent of Hi-Fi—PCM digital stereo—has turned up on only one camcorder to date, Kodak's modular MVS-5000. This model had some serious ergonomic problems of its own, but they didn't appear to be related to the PCM audio recording method.)

The VHS Hi-Fi recording method requires two extra heads mounted, along with the video heads, on a head drum inside the machine. They don't take up an inordinate amount of space, but the accompanying electronics for the VHS Hi-Fi audio recording system do.

### Weighty Matters

And that's where the first problem with the VM7100 lies. It's not terribly heavy for a full-size VHS camcorder—just a hair over seven pounds with battery and tape (hmm... come to think of it, that's not exactly lightweight)—but the way the record/playback mechanism of the camcorder has been mounted is kind of unpractical, to say the least. Imagine a hardbound unabridged dictionary with a lens and a handgrip attached and you've got a good idea of what this camcorder feels like. It makes balancing pretty difficult—I used a tripod with this camcorder a lot more than I usually do.

The control layout on the right-hand side of the camcorder isn't a marvel of simplicity, either. Instead of separate buttons, the right-hand side has three soft-touch keys. These keys handle up to three functions each, so you have to press each key in a particular spot in order to get the desired function. Since most of these controls deal with the VCR section of the camcorder rather than the camera/record section, it's not such a big deal, but it's still occasionally annoying.

Thankfully, shooting videos is not such a big deal. Push the power button, insert a tape, push the record button and you're ready to go. The record/pause symbol appears in the display indicator on the right-hand side of the camcorder, and inside the viewfinder you'll see a short horizontal line in the upper right-hand corner. When you press the orange button on the rear of the handgrip, the line disappears and "REC" appears. And you're shooting. This method also puts all the camera functions—focus, iris setting, etc.—on automatic.

The electronic viewfinder is detachable, as is the stereo microphone; both are mounted above the lens of the camcorder.

A detachable battery powers the camcorder for an hour; there's also a battery recharger and an A/C adapter that slides onto the camcorder's back in the same way the battery does. Optional accessories include a shoulder strap and a carrying case. Given the weight of the camcorder and the multiplicity of its functions, these accessories are certainly recommended.

On the left-hand side of the camcorder are buttons for white-balance setting, quick review and the like. On the right-hand side, again, are controls for setting tape speed, audio mode (Hi-Fi, normal, mix) and audio level. I didn't feel that the controls were laid out all that logically; this confusion led to several crises of confidence while using the VM7100.

### Quality Results

All these complaints out of the way, I have to say that I was mightily impressed by both the picture and sound quality of the VM7100. Color quality was particularly stunning; such tough colors as red came out vivid and bright, with hardly any bleeding. Skin tones also looked very nice. The camcorder did okay under low-light conditions, which the electronic viewfinder kindly tips you off to.

In-camera cuts were very clean; no horizontal jitter or noise bars to be seen.



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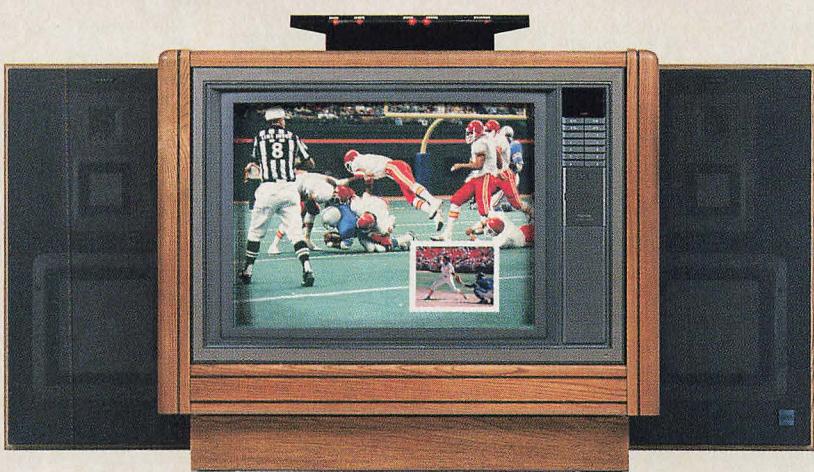
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Since the camcorder produces such exemplary results to begin with, it's ideal to use when you're going to be editing what you shoot onto a different tape. Naturally, the picture quality was at its best when the fastest recording speed, SP, was used. Quality degenerated, but not too drastically, in both the EP and LP recording modes.

Sound quality was also very good, as you'd expect. The attachable stereo microphone is sensitive—maybe too sensitive—picking up noises I didn't want as well as those I did. One noise I didn't hear on the Hi-Fi soundtrack was that of the camcorder mechanism itself—operation is very quiet, which, in this case, is not only desirable, but also necessary.

Of course, in one's daily life, one doesn't always have a need for Hi-Fi quality audio. How often do you stage a concert at home, anyway? I know I don't. I figured that finding out how well the camcorder reproduced top-quality audio meant inputting something other than dialog from my actors. So I detached the stereo microphone and plugged a portable CD player into the mike inputs. The results were exemplary.

Playback of prerecorded Hi-Fi tapes was also very good. It's strange: when you consider the VM7100 strictly as a VCR it's something of a marvel. While certainly not effects-laden—no timer program function or special effects capabilities to speak of—it does the basic job you want a Hi-Fi VCR to do. Only when you look at it from the camcorder angle do the problems show up.

Still, the applications of the VM7100 are quite varied, once you forget about the pain in your arm and start concentrating on the creative possibilities. Amateur musicians will no doubt find the VM7100 a good tool for making home music videos, or taping rehearsals or jam sessions. By using different microphones you can take full advantage of the stereo capabilities.

On balance, this camcorder gets a decidedly mixed review. While I was pleased with all the results I got, I was unimpressed by the camcorder's general lack of portability. It's clunky, to be sure; it took a week of use before I could get a steady handheld tracking shot.

There's no denying, however, that the VM7100 is a fine performer and a big step forward in camcorder technology. Zenith has done something commendable here; we only wish the company had done it with a more practical sense of design.

—Glenn Kenny

### NEXT MONTH

Next month, a Hands-On report on Sansui's VX-99, the company's latest video processor. A somewhat scaled-down variation of its AV-99, this model offers a couple of unique and intriguing features. We'll put it through its paces and deliver the verdict in our July issue.

# The Impossible Became Possible ...

On May 25, 1986 six and a half million Americans joined hands in an unprecedented demonstration of the American spirit to call attention to the plight of the hungry and homeless in America.

To mark the one year anniversary, Hands Across America is pleased to offer a special 30 minutes commemorative videocassette, "The Story of Hands Across America." This video captures the excitement and scope of the event with footage from across the country, set to the music of Kenny Rogers, Lionel Richie and many others.

Most importantly, "The Story of Hands Across America" is a tribute to the American people, especially to those who had the imagination, determination and good will to take the impossible and make it happen.

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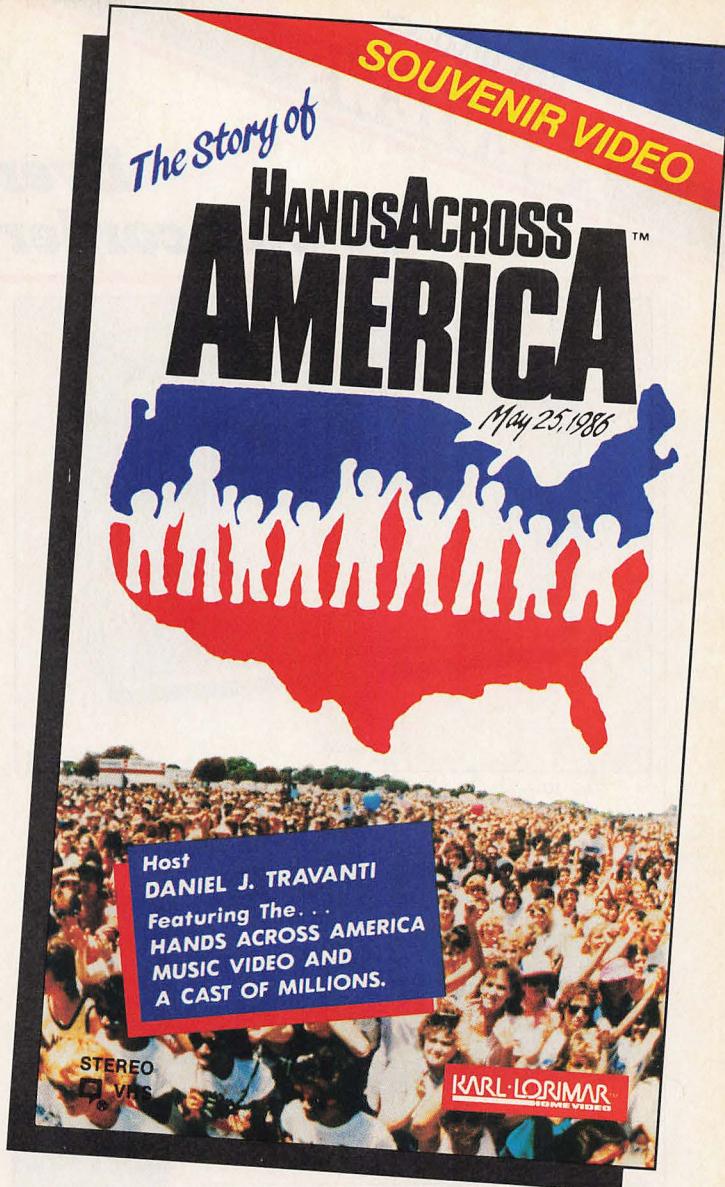
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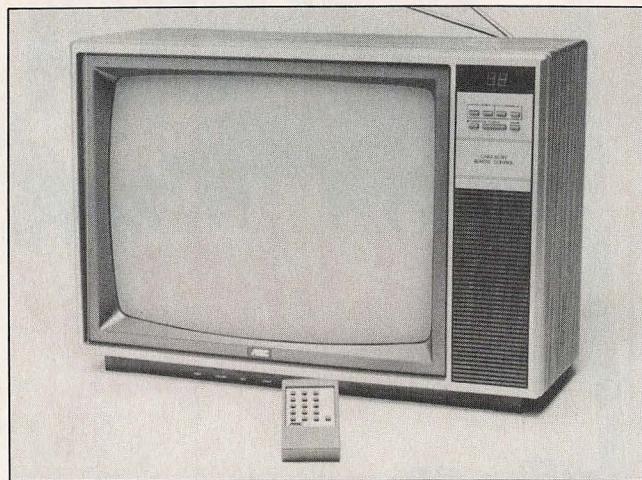
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# Everything From Basic TVs To Camcorder Gadgets And PC/Video



The 19-inch, remote controlled color TV set from AOC.



Shintom's new portable VHS player.



The PDS converter weds VCRs and PCs.

A Drake remote.



The four-piece Bush furniture system in oak veneers.

## AOC

### Color Television Model C9192 \$359

This remote controlled, 19-inch, cable compatible set achieves 425 lines of resolution from direct video inputs, according to the manufacturer. You can select from 105 channels with random access or sequential tuning.

Mechanically, the set features a Hibricon high color-density picture tube and AOC's frequency-lock-loop system. A lower-price version of the C9192, the C9140 (\$249), utilizes the same chassis, but lacks the remote control features of its more expensive line-mate.

*AOC, 10991 N.W. Airworld Dr. Kansas City, MO 64153 (816) 891-8066*

### SHINTOM Videocassette Player Model VP-2000 \$289.95

This totable play-only model weighs 16% pounds (as much as an average table VCR), thanks partly to its durable outer casing. The two-head VP-2000 plays back VHS tapes in all three speeds, allows for fast-forward or reverse scanning, and includes a freeze-frame button among its soft-touch controls. After a cassette plays all the way through, it automatically rewinds.

*Shintom, 20435 S. Western Ave. Torrance, CA 90501 (213) 328-7200.*

## PDS

### Video Scan Converter Model VSC 6400 \$14,995

A new piece of wishware for computer/videophiles, the VSC-6400 converts very high resolution computer-generated graphics (pixel maps of 1,280 x 1,000 with scan rates up to 64kHz) to conventional NTSC video. This permits computer graphics artists to record their creations with a regular VCR. Interfacing requires a computer terminal that provides RGB video and sync signals.

Two lower-price models (the

VSC-5500, \$12,995, and the VSC-3400, \$9,995) also convert computer graphics to video, but at lower resolution levels.

*PDS, 1152 Santa Barbara St. San Diego, CA 92107 (619) 222-7900*

## DRAKE

### Universal Remote Control Model PRC2400 \$129.95

Drake manufactured this new line of programmable remote controls to operate its satellite receivers, plus two other infrared remote controlled components. The 41-key PRC2400 comes preprogrammed to operate receivers in Drake's 2400 line, but you can override that program and substitute a third component of your choice. As with the Onkyo and GE universal remotes, you place the 2400 head-to-head with your current remote, then run through the functions so the 2400 can memorize them.

*Drake, P.O. Box 112 Miamisburg, OH 45342 (513) 866-2421*

## BUSH

### Furniture System L130WS Series

The system in the accompanying photo (\$889.80, as shown) includes four separate wall units, each with an oak veneer finish, and solid oak door pulls. These components, all part of Bush's New Generations line, include hidden precut holes to allow easy installation of an A/V system.

The largest piece (the 139) accommodates most monitor/receivers up to 27 inches behind its closing doors. A second monitor can fit on the large, adjustable shelves of the 134 (shown to the left of center in the picture at left). Each of the 20-inch wide cabinets (the 132s, on both ends) can house assorted components behind their smoked glass doors. Each of the six-foot high cases measures 19 3/8 inches deep.

*Bush, One Mason Dr. P.O. Box 460 Jamestown, NY 14702-0460 (716) 665-2000*

## CHAPARRAL Satellite Receiver *Cheyenne IR/D*

This integrated satellite receiver/descrambler combines a computer synthesized receiver, a programmable dish drive and a VideoCipher II descrambler. On-screen display acknowledges all functions controlled from the IR/D's wireless remote.

An automatic tune key, operable from both the front panel and the remote, automatically adjusts the polarity and dish position for optimum signal reception. Additional features include parental lockout, automatic C- and Ku-band selection and digital stereo on most subscription programs.

*Chaparral, 2450 N. First St.  
San Jose, CA 95131  
(408) 435-1530*

## PANAMAX Surge Suppressor *CoaxMAX \$89*

This new AC line-surge suppressor/noise filter incorporates a coaxial-cable surge protection device as well. The coaxial in and out accept F-type cable connections. According to the manufacturer, the filter provides up to 70 dB of noise reduction and attenuates frequencies from 10 kHz to 100 MHz. The CoaxMAX handles a rated maximum of 15 amperes.

*Panamax, 150 Mitchell Blvd.  
San Rafael, CA 94903  
(415) 499-3900*

## OSRAM Video Light *Model 1002 \$199.95*

An economy switch allows this 100-watt tungsten halogen video lamp to illuminate for lengthy shoots without overheating. A blower cooler helps in the cooling department too. The light adjusts to flood or spot angles, and the four barn doors control the area of illumination.

The 1002 mounts on an optional light stand, or, with the included bracket, directly onto a camera or camcorder. A 90° swiveling hinge allows for off-the-ceiling reflection. The optional daylight conversion filter raises the light from 3,400 K to 5,600 K for more natural lighting effects.

*Osram, 7200 Huron River Dr.  
Dexter, MI 48130-1099  
(800) 521-4042*

## SAMSUNG Color Television *Model TC2023S \$499.95*

The three-watts-per-channel stereo amplifier built into this MTS/SAP (multichannel television sound/second audio program) equipped TV powers a pair of front-mounted speakers. Terminals on the rear panel permit you to hook up external speakers as well. The 20-inch, square cornered high contrast tube has a comb filter.

A wireless remote controls the set's frequency synthesized, 139-channel cable compatible tuner. Additional features on the TC2023S include two A/V input jacks, an A/V output jack, on-screen time and channel display and a stereo headphone jack.

*Samsung, 301 Mayhill St.  
Saddle Brook, NJ 07662  
(201) 587-9600*

## MONSTER CABLE Remote Power Booster *Zapit \$24.95*

With foresight for the farsighted, the familiar A/V accessory company now offers this remote-control range extender. Once affixed to an existing remote control, such as the Sony model shown at right, the Zapit extends its operable range to over 100 feet, according to the manufacturer. With the additional power, Monster Cable suggests, the remote need no longer be pointed at the component in order to operate it.

*Monster Cable  
101 Townsend St.  
San Francisco, CA 94107  
(415) 777-1355*

## VIDICRAFT Video Stabilizer *Play-Right \$129.95*

Following in the footsteps of this company's full-feature enhancer/stabilizer (the IVE-200, introduced last fall), this component helps eliminate the playback problems experienced when viewing Macrovision encoded tapes. However, the manufacturer's engineers designed this simple, two-button low-price model for consumers who already own other video enhancing equipment and only need relief from anticopy protection.

*Vidicraft  
0704 S.W. Bancroft St.  
Portland, OR 97201  
(503) 223-4884*



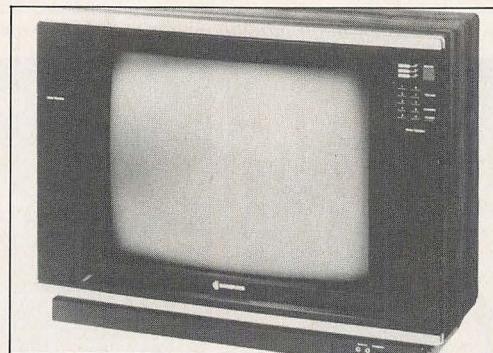
*Chaparral's integrated satellite receiver/descrambler.*



*The Panamax CoaxMAX.*



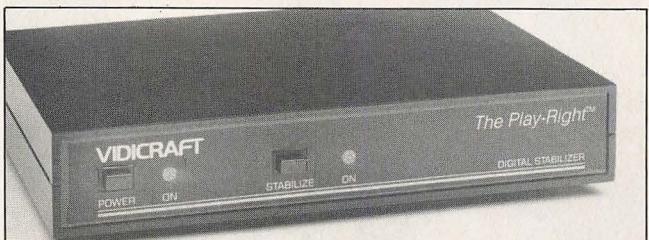
*A new video lamp from Osram.*



*An MTS/SAP 20-inch stereo TV from Samsung.*



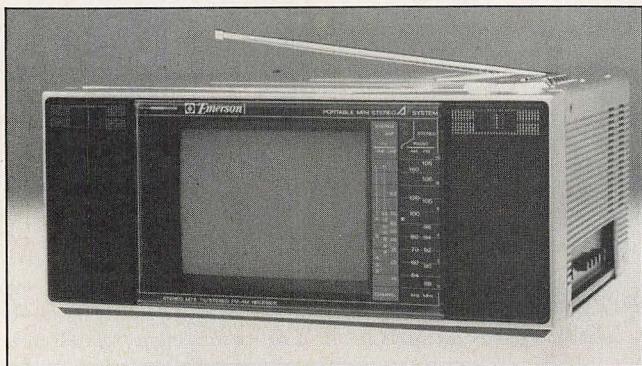
*The Monster Cable power booster extends remote range.*



*Vidicraft's Play-Right stabilizes Macrovision-encoded tapes.*



The auto-focus Pocket 8 by Chinon uses a CCD image sensor.



A cool new boob tube/boom box with MTS from Emerson.



Kintek's mobile charger.



A nylon camcorder bag from Z-Bag.



The Media Optics Ready Steady Cam stabilizes camcorders.

## CHINON

### 8mm Camcorder

**Model C8-C60 \$1,895**

The lightweight (2%<sub>10</sub> pounds) Pocket 8 may not *really* fit inside an average pocket, but its CCD image sensor does permit low-light shooting down to 7 lux, according to Chinon. A focal zone indicator within the  $\frac{1}{3}$ -inch CRT viewfinder flashes when the framed subject goes out of focus.

This auto-focus, continuous white-balance-equipped camcorder uses the Chinon 9, 54mm macro TV video lens with a maximum aperture of f1.2 and a 6:1 zoom ratio. A one-touch four-second review button provides quick recaps, and an insert recording function lets you add scenes to a completed tape.

*Chinon, 43 Fadem Rd.  
Springfield, NJ 07081  
(201) 376-9260*

## EMERSON

### Portable Color TV/Radio

**Model PCS440 \$399.95**

This new boob tube/boom box combines a 5½-inch color television with an AM/FM stereo radio in a 10-pound package. To make best use of the available stereo speakers, the manufacturer built in an MTS/SAP decoder.

With its A/V input and output jacks, the PCS440 can double as a review monitor on camcorder outings. Other features on the set include an 82-channel VHS/UHF tuner and an adjustable viewing stand.

*Emerson, One Emerson Ln.  
N. Bergen, NJ 07047  
(201) 854-0747*

## KINTEK

### Battery Charger

**Mobilizer 1 \$59.95**

For camcorder-equipped vehicular vacationers, this new

cellular battery charger powers any 12-volt video battery. By plugging the charger's cord into the lighter socket of a car or an RV, you can recharge a typical 12-volt, two-amp-hour lead acid battery in about two hours, according to the manufacturer. The vehicle doesn't have to be running in order to produce a charge.

*Kintek, 4123 Rowland Ave.  
El Monte, CA 91731  
(818) 350-2136*

## Z-BAG

### Camcorder Bag

**Model HD07D \$79.54**

This new camcorder bag uses  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch foam padding to protect its contents. The cordura nylon outer casing can be ordered in four color combinations (black/red, navy/silver, maroon/silver and gray/maroon). For an additional \$5, Z-Bag will embroider the owner's name on a padded shoulder strap. The bag includes a zippered pouch and inner compartments for gadgets.

*Z-Bag, 2020 Industrial Circle  
P.O. Box 27273  
Salt Lake City, UT 84127  
(800) 453-8736*

## MEDIA OPTICS

### Camcorder/Camera Mount

**Ready Steady Cam**

A lightweight (12 ounces), ergonomic solution to some videographers' most nagging problem: shoulder fatigue. While the top of the mount follows the contour of your shoulder, the lower section tucks between the upper arm and chest—diffusing the setup's weight and adding stability. An optional converter lets photographers mount a 35mm camera to the device.

*Media Optics  
P.O. Box 3174  
Burbank, CA 91504*

## ON THE DRAWING BOARDS

**THAT'S REALLY SUPER, SUPER VHS:** Could **Panasonic** introduce the first S-VHS camcorder? Its parent company, Matsushita, reportedly crossed the first barrier by developing a CCD image sensor capable of an estimated 430 lines of resolution. The next considerable hurdle? Cost-effectiveness. . . . **TDK** introduced the first S-VHS videotape in Japan (priced about \$2 higher than its current top grade), and the company has an S-VHS-C cassette in the wings. . . . **Maxell** and **Fuji** should have full-size S-VHS cassettes ready this summer.

**YOU STILL WON'T WANT ONE ON YOUR FOOT:** The engineers at **Mitsubishi** recently found a way to trim 14 pounds from the company's 35-inch tubes (from 137 to 123 pounds). The lighter screen requires less cabinet support—knocking a few more ounces off the set's substantial 275-pound heft. The manufacturer plans to have the new, lower-cost models in the stores by fall.

—Greg Fagan

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TATION.  
WITCHBOARD  
SCARES AS  
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Director of Photography ROY H. WAGNER Written and Directed by KEVIN S. TENNEY

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# Video Reviews

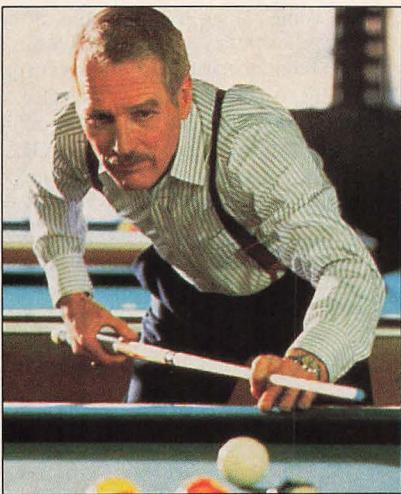
## LATEST MOVIES

### THE COLOR OF MONEY ★★★★

*Paul Newman, Tom Cruise, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Helen Shaver.*  
Directed by Martin Scorsese. 1986.  
MPAA: R. (Touchstone cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, 119 min., \$89.95)

By Neal Gabler

When last we saw Paul Newman as Fast Eddie Felson, some 25 years ago in Robert Rossen's *The Hustler*, he was leaving a somber pool hall, chastened, disenchanted and defiant. When we meet him again in Martin Scorsese's edgy sequel, *The Color of Money*, he's a successful liquor wholesaler who knows how to work every scam. But, mostly he's just going through the motions and, as he later admits, "It's tired." Felson is a man waiting to be regenerated. He sees his chance in a grinning young flake (Cruise) who happens to be a virtuoso with the pool cue just the way Eddie used to be.



Oscar winner Newman: still a virtuoso.

So Eddie coaxes the kid to join him on the road, cruising from pool hall to pool hall as Eddie teaches him and his girlfriend (Mastrantonio) the ropes.

In a more conventional director's hands, this might have easily turned into a pool hall *Rocky*, with Cruise embracing Newman after his obligatory triumph in the billiards championship. But Scorsese is anything but

conventional. One of the most flamboyant, passionate and idiosyncratic of directors, Scorsese turns this, as he turns virtually all his movies, into a tale of redemption which owes much more to the Gospels than to *Stal-* lone. What Felson realizes as he watches the kid's brilliance is the unabashed joy of *being* the best, untainted by money or compromise—the very things he has taught him. And what he seeks to regain for himself, finally, is the sense of innocence and excellence that he's lost a long time ago.

Working from a tough, vernacular screenplay by novelist Richard Price, Scorsese provides the heat, the energy and the surprise. There probably isn't a director who loves moving the camera as much—and he uses it here the way Cruise uses his cue, ramming through the movie with a kind of eager intensity. He certainly isn't a master of dramatic construction, and in his movies, including this one, the sum of the parts often seem to be greater than the whole. But, scene by scene, he finds effects that are breathtaking, as in a long sequence in which Newman coolly watches Cruise dispatch a pretender or in one in which Cruise defeats another pool shark while singing "Werewolves of London."

Cruise is a charismatic actor and he brings real excitement to the screen. But in this movie of anguish and revitalization, it's Newman who provides the gravity. For years now he seems to have been refining himself, shucking all the tricks, the methods, the techniques, until he has subdued himself to the point of minimalism. There

isn't a wasted move. It's an extraordinary, deservedly Oscar-winning performance, with a kind of wounded poetry in it, as intense in its own understated way as Scorsese's direction is in its more febrile way.

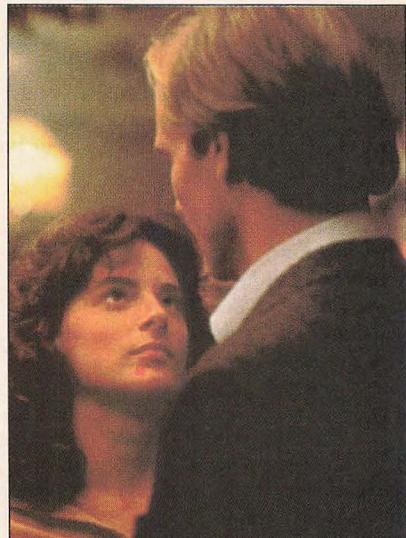
Like a good pool game, then, *The Color of Money* on video offers the pleasure of watching one aspiring pro up against an old master, as well as the sheer exultation of a director who loves his medium the way Felson loves pool.

### CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD ★★★

*William Hurt, Marlee Matlin, Piper Laurie, Philip Bosco.* Directed by Randa Haines. 1986. MPAA: R. (Paramount cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 119 min., \$79.95; LV disc, \$29.95)

By Andrew Sarris

Mark Medoff's successful Broadway play about the romance between a deaf woman, who chooses not to speak imperfectly, and an innovative teacher, who tries to break through her shell of silence, is the kind of



Oscar winner Matlin: fierce defender.

#### ABOUT THESE REVIEWS

To ensure that our critics parallel the viewing environment of most home viewers, VR critics normally review programs in their homes. Unless otherwise indicated: All programs reviewed are supplied by the manufacturer; all tapes are SP or Beta II; all LV discs are EP. All programs are in color unless marked B&W. □ indicates closed captions for the hearing impaired; SS indicates surround sound.

★ ★ ★ ★ OUTSTANDING  
★ ★ ★ GOOD  
★ ★ AVERAGE  
★ BELOW AVERAGE

inspirational entertainment that is very much out of favor these days with much of the critical establishment around the country. But the moviegoing public seems to approve, as did the Motion Picture Academy, which nominated the picture and co-leads Hurt and Matlin for Oscars—and awarded one to Matlin for her performance.

Actually, *Children of a Lesser God* is far from maudlin or calculatingly sentimental. The philosophical conflict between Matlin's handicapped perfectionist and Hurt's "hearing" pedagog lifts the drama far above the usual disease-of-the-week shows on TV. Hurt plays his part with a movie star's charm, which is good in this context, because the clinical material needs some leavening of humor and behavioral variety to escape undue solemnity. For her part, Matlin, a deaf actress, projects a fascinating fierceness in defending her soundless turf. It may not sound like much in print, but a series of sequences in which the two lovers confront the problem of Hurt's passion for classical music and Matlin's tragic inability to share it raises profound questions about the boundaries of relationships.

Haines directs this drama with verve and skill, but the script is not always clearly focused, especially in the scenes with Piper Laurie as Matlin's mother, who wavers between caring concern and callous indifference. The very tentative effort to establish Matlin's motivations by peeking into her past is at once half-hearted and obtrusive. For his part, the Hurt character seems too much the congenital drifter to engage in such an obsessive relationship. There is both too much about the problems of the deaf, and not enough.

The movie plays well on video inasmuch as an essentially two-person drama calls for many carefully framed compositions and an intimate scale of photography. All in all, *Children of a Lesser God* is much subtler than the tearjerking potential its theme would suggest. All concerned are to be commended for their restraint.

## TAI-PAN ★★

*Bryan Brown, Joan Chen, John Stanton, Bill Leadbetter. Directed by Daryl Duke. 1986. MPAA: R. (Vestron cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 127 min., \$79.98; LV disc, \$39.98)*

By Joanna Langfield

*Tai-Pan* is a classically terrible movie. It's big and sprawling and completely unbelievable. But, in a way its makers never planned, *Tai-Pan* is also mesmerizing. It's one of those expensive, lavish epics that's so bad, it's almost good. Repeat, almost.

Brown stars as a pioneer European tradesman, forging new territory in Canton, China, back in the early 1800s. Life is tough when you're the new guy in town. The ruling emperor isn't real thrilled to have him around, buying up silks and bribing the locals. Brown's girlfriend (Chen) has mixed feelings about the guy, too. She knows he's

a brute, but boy can he kiss! And then, even our hero owns up to some inner conflict—worrying that the drugs he's been using to lull the Chinese into submission will eventually fall into "the wrong hands." Talk about moral dilemmas.

When producer Raffaella De Laurentiis (daughter of Dino) announced she'd be making a movie version of the James Clavell bestseller, she insisted this would be a classy and faithful production. Classy it is not. Although a load of money has been spent,



Tai-Pan's Chen, Brown: For laughs?

the movie looks cheap. I'm not sure just how faithful the script is to the original novel—I was too bored to pay close attention to the plot. But integrity is not what this movie is all about. What's most evident here is the splashy silliness of the whole thing.

This *Tai-Pan* has all the impact of a romance novel. It's lush and colorful and unexpectedly (and probably unintentionally) campy. Rent it and have a good laugh.

## LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS ★★★

*Rick Moranis, Ellen Greene, Vincent Gardenia, Steve Martin, James Belushi, John Candy, Bill Murray, Christopher Guest. Directed by Frank Oz. 1986. MPAA: PG-13. (Warner cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, 94 min., \$89.95; LV disc, CX stereo, \$34.98)*

By Jeffrey Lyons

In case you're not old enough to remember 1960 clearly, that was the year in which—in addition to hula hoops and the Pittsburgh Pirates' incredible World Series victory—there was an oddball Roger

Corman movie about a bloodthirsty plant. Years later, an off-Broadway musical version based on the movie settled in for a long run. Now comes its inevitable movie version. It's bizarre, wonderful and loony.

But let's begin at the beginning. In a grimy, struggling little plant store on skid row, a pathetically nerdy botanical genius named Seymour purchases an exotic plant and names it Audrey II, after a ditzy blonde who also works in the store. Soon Seymour—brilliantly portrayed by *Ghostbusters*' Rick Moranis—realizes that the plant grows only when it gets human blood as a steady diet! What's more, the strange thing talks, too—or actually, since this version is a musical, *Audrey II sings*. As Seymour keeps feeding Audrey II blood, the plant grows, and soon the little shop is thriving. So's the movie. It quickly takes off and never stops.

Seymour, you see, may be a nerd, but he has feelings—and he's in love with Audrey, his airhead co-worker. With her dyed hair, push-up bra, high heels and Brooklyn accent, Ellen Greene, re-creating her stage role, nearly steals the movie. But the Path of Love is sometimes twisted and, alas, Audrey has a lover: a sadistic, rotten, motorcycle-riding Elvis Presley lookalike, smashingly played by Steve Martin in the role of his career. How his absolutely classic performance was overlooked by this year's Oscar nominators is a total mystery to me! Martin comes along in the middle of the movie and explodes across the screen.

Levi Stubbs, the original lead singer of the Four Tops, is perfectly cast as the voice of Audrey II. His wailing of "Feed Me" or his singing of "Mean Green Mother from Outer Space" has to be seen and heard to be believed. He makes Audrey II seem positively real, nasty, and hungry, too! Di-



Audrey II: bloodthirsty but hilarious.

rector Oz, who honed his craft as Jim Henson's creative sidekick, knows that jokes in a movie as crazy as this can't go on too long, lest they get silly and out of hand. So, no doubt using his experience working for audiences with short attention spans on the Muppets shows, Oz keeps the movie racing along at a frantic pace, with one visual gag falling over the next. His vision is never that of a filmed play. The interiors look right for a movie, with just the right amount of staginess left intact.

Of course, much of the success of a movie such as this belongs to the plant and depends on how effective the special effects are. The effects of Bran Ferren and Lyle Conway are original, in keeping with the nuttiness of the entire production. As if all this lunacy wasn't enough, there are other visual treats to savor, such as a short but hilarious appearance by Bill Murray as one of Martin's eager patients who just happens to love any sort of pain a dentist with a dull drill can muster! Or Vincent Gardenia, outrageous as Mushnik, the sleazy owner of the strange little shop.

*Little Shop of Horrors* is a triumph of imagination, pacing, witty writing (by Howard Ashman), superb special effects and sensational performances. It loses absolutely nothing in its transformation to the video screen. It will surely have you hooting with glee.

## MONA LISA ★★★★

*Bob Hoskins, Cathy Tyson, Michael Caine. Directed by Neil Jordan. 1986. MPAA: R. (HBO/Cannon cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, 104 min., \$89.95)*

By Janet Maslin

"Angels are mean," the hero of this unprepossessing little masterpiece remarks off-handedly at the beginning of the story. And what follows proves his point in the most ironic, unexpected ways. *Mona Lisa* tells of George (Hoskins), a small-time hoodlum just out of jail, and the psychic toll taken upon him by his new assignment as a driver for an elegant call girl named Simone (Tyson). Everything about this relationship and the way it develops, as set forth in the screenplay by director Jordan with David Leland, is powerful and surprising.

*Mona Lisa* initially looks like an offbeat love story, but it develops into something much larger. The movie becomes an examination of various racial and sexual attitudes—George is white, Simone black—as well as an extremely affecting portrait of a man who discovers he's in way over his head. George's working relationship with



Mona Lisa's Hoskins, Caine, Tyson: powerful and surprising.

the elegant, coolly alluring Simone requires him to sit and wait while she engages in activities he finds more and more disturbing. It also brings him into conflict with the treacherous gangland entrepreneur (Caine) who helped send him to jail.

Caine plays a villain through and through this time. *Mona Lisa* may be the only movie in which he's ever actually snarled. And Tyson makes Simone a haunting figure, both for the way she captivates George and the way she ultimately disappoints him. But the real revelation is Hoskins. His Oscar-nominated performance has tremendous subtlety and range, conveying all the hopefulness and wariness of a man fighting to keep his composure in an ever more sordid and violent situation.

On video, even more so than on a large theatrical screen, some of the accents are thick, particularly in early scenes crucial to the exposition. But that's the beauty of home video: You can play a scene again. All of *Mona Lisa* richly rewards a second viewing.

## TRUE STORIES ★★

*John Goodman, Anne McEnroe, Swoosie Kurtz, Spalding Gray, David Byrne. Directed by Byrne. 1987. MPAA: PG. (Warner cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, 89 min., \$79.95; LV disc, \$34.98)*

By Neal Gabler

Anyone who knows the music of Talking Heads and its leader, David Byrne, knows that Byrne views the world with an ironic detachment that verges on the bizarre. Byrne is cool. He sings without inflection or emotion, as if his circuits had been shorted. His body jolts in mechanical

spasms. He looks like a lobotomized nerd. And his songs—well, his songs suggest that we're all part of some grand prank, too complex for comprehension and too weird to take seriously.

It's that kind of vision that suffuses *True Stories*, directed by Byrne and written by him with Stephen Tobolowsky and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Beth Henley. Set in Virgil, TX, with Byrne himself as its affable narrator, *True Stories* takes us on a musical excursion through an America of shopping malls, square semiconductor plants, evangelists, metal houses, bouffant hairdos and small-town parades. It's America the Tacky—where everyone is a little addled and everything is a little askew. One couple hasn't talked to one another for years. One rich woman has decided never to leave her bed. Another man claims he can read radio waves from people's heads.

Byrne's object, as he drives through the picture in his red Chrysler convertible and gives us brief glimpses of the citizenry, seems to be to show us how we've vulgarized this country. His "true stories" are really snippets of unusual American behavior that show us how we've even vulgarized ourselves. It's not exactly a sympathetic portrait and it rapidly wears thin; if you've seen one gargoyle you've seen them all.

But near the end of the movie, Byrne's own wide-eyed geniality seems to take hold and two songs, "People Like Us" and "City of Dreams," actually make the case that underneath all this crud and within all these loonies, there is still a basic decency that unites us. It may be too late, but it does provide an affecting humane climax to a cool and disappointingly unaffectionate movie.

**NOTHING IN COMMON ★★**  
*Tom Hanks, Jackie Gleason, Eva Marie Saint, Bess Armstrong. Directed by Garry Marshall. 1986. MPAA: PG. (HBO/Cannon cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, 120 min., \$89.95)*

By Maury Z. Levy

Here's a surprise: Tom Hanks works at an ad agency in this one. Sound *Bosom Buddyish* to you? Hanks, as usual, plays himself—a glib, fast-talking smart aleck who lives in one of those apartments that people live in only in the movies.

Meanwhile, on the other side of town, Mom (Saint) leaves Dad (Gleason). What we see of Saint in this movie makes little



Hanks, Gleason: fast-talking, fast-living.

sense. What we see of Gleason isn't enough ("Your mother couldn't cook, anyway. You know, the dog didn't die. He committed suicide").

Gleason is the last of the old-time salesmen, Hanks is a new-age yup. Both are womanizers. Both are constantly selling not so much their products as themselves. Irony sets up the fall. Son lands the big account. Dad loses his job. Dad comes to Son with hat on head and heart on sleeve. It's a touching moment that takes a full hour to reach—which makes the whole movie a very long reach.

What starts out fast and funny, quickly loses its way. The movie becomes too long, too disjointed and too common. Hanks' relationship with Gleason, the very thread of this piece, is never really sewn up. Characters come and go, almost like guest stars. And maybe that's the heart of the problem. This is, in style and substance, too much like a TV movie of the week. The good part of that is that it holds up well on cassette. It looks like it was shot for the home screen. And that could be because this is a Garry Marshall movie (he of *Laverne and Shirley*).

You'll probably want to watch this and make your own judgment. And there are spots that make it worthwhile. It can be a

cute cassette. Some critics even heralded it as one of the year's 10 best. Must have been a slow year.

**REFORM SCHOOL GIRLS ★★★**

*Wendy O. Williams, Linda Carol, Pat Ast. Directed by Tom DeSimone. 1986. MPAA: R. (New World cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 94 min., \$79.95)*

By Doug Brod

As a self-conscious sendup of bimbos-in-the-big-house flicks, *Reform School Girls* succeeds on its own decidedly meager terms. While retaining the mean-spiritedness and general aura of sleaziness usually associated with movies of this ilk, it plays things very broadly and even offers some fresh twists.

The institution of the title is Pridemore Correctional Facility, where the supposedly underage inhabitants look as if they celebrated their sweet 16s many, many years ago. The warden (played with relative restraint by the awesome Sybil Danning) preaches evangelically over the P.A. after the lights go out. And in addition to the flesh-packed cat-fighting that goes on, there's also a novel, uproarious or gross scene (depending on your frame of mind) of a literal cat-stomping. There are also choice bits of rude dialog sprinkled liberally throughout, including Divine-clone Pat Ast's unprintable entrance line. Head-banging diva Wendy O. Williams is the embodiment of "salty" as the butch head tough in a dorm full of G-string-clad starlets.

The video image is excellent and the hard rock soundtrack (on which Williams growls the title tune) sounds just right.

**STREETS OF GOLD ★★**

*Klaus Maria Brandauer, Wesley Snipes, Adrian Pasdar. Directed by Joe Roth. 1986. MPAA: R. (Vestron cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 94 min., \$79.95)*

By Mark Trost

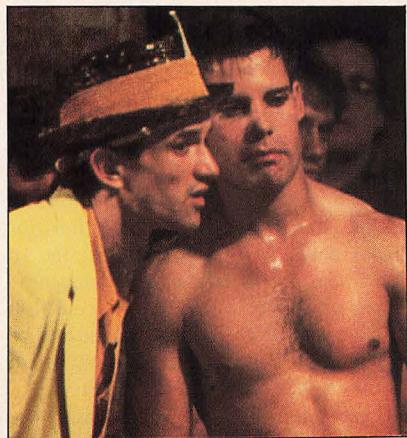
*Rocky IV* meets *The Karate Kid Part II*. That sums up this silly but entertaining fight flick, combining elements of virtually every successful underdog-trains-to-beat-tyrannical-opposition movie made during past five years. Although it tries to add class to the act by casting Brandauer (of *Out Of Africa* and *Mephisto* fame) in the leading role, even his polish can shine up this gold-plated entry only so much.

Brandauer plays a Jewish Soviet boxing champ kicked out of his homeland because he beat up the official who refused to let him go to the Olympics. Now in Brooklyn, he

plans to get revenge by training two prodigal street kids (Snipes and Pasdar) so they can beat a contingent of visiting Red boxers.

As far-fetched as it all seems, the understated Brandauer manages to make it almost believable—despite the imitative direction of Roth (right down to the patented Avildsen slow-mo punching) and the uneven performances by Snipes and Pasdar.

*Streets of Gold* has one additional dimension going for it: It shows what life



Pasdar, Snipes: fast-hitting, fast-tracking.

is like among Soviet emigres in New York, right down to the tacky nightclubs in which ex-Moscovites croon about the homeland. Excellent picture quality and a fine Hi-Fi track also help make this one cinematic street you won't have to fear walking down.

**FIREWALKER ★**

*Chuck Norris, Louis Gossett Jr., Melody Anderson, Will Sampson. Directed by J. Lee Thompson. 1986. MPAA: PG. (Media cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, 104 min., \$79.95)*

By Gregory P. Fagan

Imagine a *Hope and Crosby Road* romp scripted by rambunctious nuns and starring Lone Wolf McQuade and Dr. MacArthur St. Clair. Accent this with some ham-handed racial stereotyping. Now picture Hollywood's two leading B-movie moguls smiling at investors across a Cannes coffee table, saying, "It's very *Indiana Jones*." Then maybe you'll understand why the three leads in *Firewalker* journey off in search of lost Indian gold in the South American jungle. With any luck, you still won't care.

What really palls one while watching this flick? The gut feeling that nobody involved with this cliched pastiche of keen karate chops and deadpan humor cared enough to make it one star better so it would be worth an evening's rental.



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*—Patrick Goldstein,  
Los Angeles Times*

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## ARMED AND DANGEROUS ★★

*John Candy, Eugene Levy, Robert Loggia. Directed by Mark Lester. 1986. MPAA: PG-13. (RCA/Columbia cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, 88 min., \$79.95)*

By Mark Trost

Johnny LaRue, where are you?

What should have been an enjoyable John Candy sendup of security guards in the tradition of *Stripes* (courtesy of screenwriters Harold [*Ghostbusters*] Ramis and Peter Torokvei) has, in the hands of director Lester, become a derivative, near-humorless piece of *Beverly Hills Cop*-style action-adventure.

Candy is cast against his well-honed comic type as a self-assured superpoliceman thrown off the force when he is framed by some corrupt cops. Candy's *SCTV* companion Eugene Levy is in more comfortable surroundings, playing an inept lawyer who gives up his practice after a Mansonlike client turns against him. As fate would have it, the duo take jobs as security guards with a firm secretly run by a shady union boss (Loggia), who just happens to be in cahoots with the nogoodniks who brought Candy up on the trumped-up charges.

Part Dirty Harry, part Eddie Murphy, part Oliver Hardy, Candy attempts to nail Loggia and his pals to get back on the force (although the Candy we know and love



Levy, Candy: Who's guarding the guards?

would have thanked the bad guys for the new career.) Although Levy remains true to form—trying to run away from trouble, but always finding it—Candy goes looking for goons to fight, parties to crash and cars to wreck. Only briefly do we glimpse the

struggling, lovable Candy who single-handedly managed to turn a pedestrian comedy like *Summer Rental* into a hit.

An early sequence in which Candy is driven by guilt to chase a cat up a tree (and gets stuck), and the finale that has the comedian, in full motorcycle regalia, huffing and puffing down the highway begging motorists to give him their cars to chase the bad guys, are just about the only times this otherwise comic misfire comes alive.

## DEATH DRUG ★★

*Philip-Michael Thomas, Rosalind Cash. Directed by Oscar Williams. 1978. (Academy cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, 73 min., \$69.95)*

## COCAINE WARS ★★

*John Schneider, Kathryn Witt, Royal Dano. Directed by Hector Olivera. 1985. MPAA: R. (Media cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 82 min., \$79.95)*

By Doug Brod

With the antidrug media blitz in full sway, there's no shortage of substance-abuse-oriented video dramas. And, as one of two new videocassette releases proves, *Reefer Madness*-style silliness was not restricted to the 1930s.

Even before he started cleaning out all the coke in South Florida on *Miami Vice*, Philip-Michael Thomas made the unforgettable TV movie *Death Drug*. In it, he plays a Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter who, with the help of a smooth-talking pusher (played by ex-VH-1 jock "Chief Rocker" Frankie Crocker), gets hooked on angel dust. His addiction leads to the usual, hyperbolic career and family problems and a final, amazing supermarket freak-out that culminates in a tete-a-tete with a speeding truck.

For added topicality an incongruous newly taped prolog and epilog are tacked onto this late-'70s production. As the whole technically inept production smacks of crass cash-in on both the drug crackdown and Thomas' current popularity (it even includes an insert of a recent Thomas music video from his failed real-life solo album), *Death Drug* only serves to trivialize important subject matter. But as camp, it's a real trip—more laughable than enlightening.

The Roger Corman-backed *Cocaine Wars* is a horse of a different color. As a standard south-of-the-border blow yarn, it's serviceable and moves swiftly. John Schneider, late of the good-ol'-boy heroics of *The Dukes of Hazzard*, plays a walrus-mustachioed DEA agent out to bust a powerful druglord.

Evidence that Corman's "speed-is-of-the-

essence" moviemaking ethos still applies can be found during the end credits; not only does the soundtrack music halt before the titles do, but also an actor identified as Edgard Moore at the beginning miraculously loses that lofty second "d" at the end. Glad to see some things never change.



Small Circle's Allen: Harvardized.

## A SMALL CIRCLE OF FRIENDS ★★

*Jameson Parker, Brad Davis, Karen Allen, Shelley Long. Directed by Rob Cohen. 1980. MPAA: R. (Key cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 112 min., \$79.98)*

By Gregory P. Fagan

The small circle of the title refers to Parker, Davis and Allen—roommates, friends and finally lovers. They meet at Harvard during the late '60s where the atmosphere of purposeful idealism and well-intentioned stupidity provides a fitting backdrop for their offbeat *menage a trois*. One expects to hear the similarly named Phil Ochs song used to frame the picture, but no such good fortune awaits the viewer.

Instead, director Cohen serves up a routine brew of mismatched teens in tumultuous times that plays like an earthy TV movie of the week. Parker's part, as a premed student from the Midwest, may be the biggest problem. While Davis and Allen—as a crazed gonzo journalist in training and a thoughtful art history major, respectively—have a blast with interesting, well-written characters, Parker stands around like a cigar store Indian. That's not to say that his portrayal lacks accuracy. America's top universities overflow with these walking wasp-o'-wood types. But do we need movies built around them?



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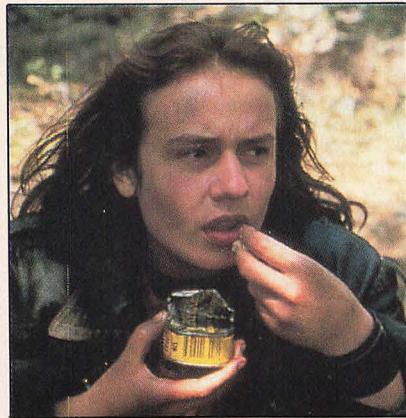
## VAGABOND ★★★★

*Sandrine Bonnaire, Macha Meril.*

*Directed by Agnes Varda. 1986. MPAA: not rated. (Pacific Arts cassette, in French, with English subtitles, 105 min., \$79.95)*

By Andrew Sarris

French director Varda's *Vagabond* is hardly your run-of-the-mill feel-good fantasy. It opens with the discovery in a ditch of a frozen-to-death young French female of undetermined origins. The movie then



Vagabond's Bonnaire: luminous.

retraces the last wintry month in her life—her aimless drifting as her path crosses those of many witnesses to her derelict's odyssey.

The movie is blessed with a luminous performance of the "vagabond" by Sandrine Bonnaire. For this role, she won the 1986 Best Actress Award from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association—a signal honor, indeed, for a foreign-language actress.

Varda employs the narrative device of having many actors talk directly to the camera—and to us—as if we were conducting an inquest into the regional and social circumstances surrounding the death. Var-

da herself grew up in this part of rural France, and has firsthand knowledge of both its beauties and its cruelties. She does not blame us or the French peasant bourgeoisie for her heroine's dismal fate. But one may feel a twinge of guilt just the same, for all the human beings who fall through the cracks of our social mechanism.

*Vagabond* plays as well on videocassette as it did on theatrical screens. In fact, its formal virtuosity becomes even more apparent on second viewing. Contrary to what it may sound like, the movie is not in any sense a "downer," inasmuch as a pervasive spirituality ennobles the suffering of a mysterious life devoid of facile clinical and sociological "explanations."

Miraculously, the movie is never sordid or squalid, and there are many surprising twists and turns in the narrative. Particularly memorable is an episode in which Bonnaire gets roaring drunk with a senile old lady she is temporarily attending. The spectacle of these two lost souls finding a redeeming rapport over a bottle of brandy is but one of the many exhilarating changes of pace that keep this material from ever becoming monotonously glum and gloomy. The mood changes that flicker across Bonnaire's magical face are alone worth the price of the videocassette. A must for aesthetically upscale collectors.

## FLICKS ★★★

*Martin Mull, Pamela Sue Martin, Joan Hackett. Directed by Peter Winograd. 1982. MPAA: R. (Media cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 79 min., \$69.95)*

By Mark Trost

Low on budget but relatively high on laughs is this often good-hearted tribute to the Saturday movie matinees of the past and present. If you remember what moviegoing was like in the 1940s (which this format at-

tempts to spoof), or have laughed at the way David Letterman uses old newsreel footage, or watched a Tom and Jerry cartoon or seen *Friday the 13th Part Whatever*, then you will get the gags in this amiable sendup.

The standout sequence is a fully animated satire salute to those violent cat-and-mouse cartoons of the '40s. The ever-battling Sunshine Boys of the funny animal set are pictured in a retirement home reciting the good old days when Mouse would plug Cat into an electrical outlet. Animation worthy of Golden Age Warner and MGM goes far



Flicks' no-brain suburbanites.

to put over the jokes. While scarcely four minutes long, *Cat and Mouse* is alone worth the price of a rental.

*Flicks* only really stumbles during a rather lackluster sendup of *Flash Gordon*. Particularly on target, however, is a parody of slasher movies, featuring Martin Mull and Betty Kennedy as a pair of no-brain suburbanites who buy a house inhabited by a comical relative of Jason.

While not in the league of such other movie spoofs as *Kentucky Fried Movie*, *Flicks* (which received limited theatrical release) is a good weekend rental.

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## PSYCHO III ★★

Anthony Perkins, Diana Scarwid, Roberta Maxwell, Jeff Fahey. Directed by Perkins. 1986. MPAA: R. (MCA cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, 99 min., \$79.95)

By Michael J. Weldon

Perkins has done a surprisingly good job directing himself as motel manager/taxidermist Norman Bates in this second sequel to Hitchcock's 1960 classic *Psycho*. This one takes for granted that we've all seen the original and its non-Hitchcock '83 sequel. Black-and-white flashback scenes and characters from both previous movies turn up here, and we even get to see Janet Leigh in that shower again.

After "22 years in the bughouse" and a brief job at the local diner, nervous Norman is faced with new characters trying to study, exploit, or even love him. A former nun (Scarwid) is checked into the notorious Room No. 1 by an obnoxious would-be rock star (Fahey) working at the Bates Motel, and a determined investigative reporter (Maxwell) insists on confronting the past. It's no wonder that Norman starts talking to his mother again.

The attempts to reinvent the cinematic past and add to the original story have their good moments, but it's pretty hard to recapture the feel of the original *Psycho* without its stark black-and-white look, the unnerving sounds orchestrated by Bernard Herrmann and, most of all, Alfred Hitchcock. The cinematography, however, is excellent, especially when it copies shots from Norman's debut. Unfortunately the videocassette I viewed had a pretty distracting light-fluctuation problem.

*Psycho III* has bloody slashings, nudity and a religious subplot that will seem either funny or distasteful depending on your own beliefs (or lack of them). If you walked in during some of the scenes, you might think you were watching a new *Porky's* sequel.

Scarwid, as usual, is good; so is Maxwell. Director Perkins gives himself most of the best, and funniest, lines. For example, when the former nun botches a suicide attempt and apologizes to Norman for the bloody bathroom, he smiles his famous awkward smile and says, "I've seen worse."

## FROM BEYOND ★★

Jeffrey Combs, Barbara Crampton, Ken Foree. Directed by Stuart Gordon. 1986. MPAA: R. (Vestron cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, 85 min., \$79.95)

By Glenn Kenny

Stuart Gordon's follow-up to his astonishing, award-winning *Re-Animator* doesn't pack nearly as much of a wallop as its predecessor. That said, *From Beyond* is a diverting romp through multicolored muck, slime and other yucky stuff. Featuring two of *Re-Animator*'s stars—the character-

istically intense Combs and the characteristically yummy Crampton—*From Beyond* compensates with wit and momentum for what it lacks in conceptual audacity.

Of course, those not familiar with the territory that Gordon has staked out will find *From Beyond* audacious above and beyond the call of duty. Combs plays a scientist working on a resonator that stimulates the pineal gland, the so-called "third eye." Apparently, when stimulated enough, said gland allows one to see the diverse—and hostile—creatures that float around us. When one of these creatures gets hold of Combs' mentor and twists his head off, Combs is held responsible. Enter Crampton as a shrink hired by the D.A. to determine Combs' sanity. Fans

of librarians will delight in her initial appearance: all prim and proper, wearing glasses even. Crampton loosens up quite a bit after re-creating the resonator experiments with Combs and Foree (who, last seen by gore fans in *Dawn of the Dead*, appears here as a cop assigned to watch over the proceedings), and librarian fans will be even more pleased.

All sorts of really weird stuff occurs in *From Beyond*, including a rather graphic demonstration of what happens when the pineal gland is overstimulated. Too hyperbolic to be genuinely gross, and peppered with some witty pseudophilosophic asides, *From Beyond* doesn't take you all the way, but it is a pretty wild ride nonetheless.

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## BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA ★★

*Kurt Russell, Kim Cattrall, Dennis Dun.*  
Directed by John Carpenter. 1986.  
MPAA: PG-13. (CBS/Fox cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, 99 min., \$79.98) □

By Mark Trost

Indiana Jones need never worry about taking a back seat to the truck-driving adventurer-hero of Carpenter's limp twist on the *Raiders* action formula.

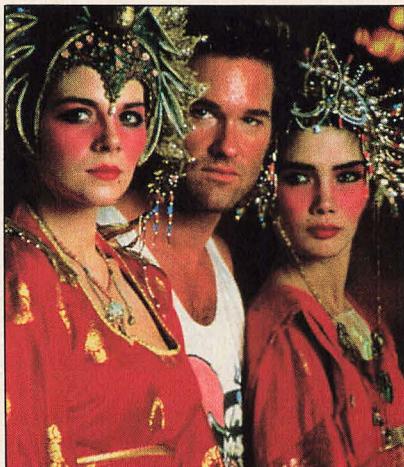
Virtually devoid of plot, characterization, logic or any of those little things that get in the way of its special effects and action sequences, *Big Trouble in Little China* has more to do with director Carpenter's ap-

parent desire to make the ultimate Saturday matinee kung fu movie than anything resembling mainstream entertainment.

The story has boisterous San Francisco trucker Russell attempting to rescue lawyer Cattrall and his best friend's fiancee (Suzee Pai) from the mystical clutches of a Fu Manchu-like overlord (James Hong). It seems the green-eyed beauties are the only females in the world who can restore the otherwise all-powerful (and all-evil) Hong to flesh and blood—that is if he manages to marry the gals before Russell and his buddies crash the ceremony. (We told you it didn't make much sense.) Hordes of human and inhuman obstacles are pitted against the rescue attempts of Russell and pal Dun—in

a seemingly endless series of wonderfully choreographed action sequences, the likes of which have not been seen since Bruce Lee battled it out with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Bodies flip, tumble, somersault and fly across football-field-sized caverns as special effects pour from the hands (and mouths) of warring wizards, all to a Hi-Fi soundtrack and excellent film-to-tape transfer.

Addicts of the chop-socky school of action moviemaking will undoubtedly welcome Carpenter's effort to bring some much-needed gloss (and who knows how many dollars) to a bargain-basement genre.



Trouble for Kurt's green-eyed beauties.

But the rest of us are left wondering: What's the point? There's little of the suspense one generally associates with a Carpenter movie, and the Indy-inspired hero leaves all the real action to the wiry Dun.

Chalk this one up as another example of a powerful director managing to talk studio brass into giving him \$15 million or so to bring an inside joke to the screen and leaving the paying audience on the outside.

## OUT OF BOUNDS ★★

*Anthony Michael Hall, Jenny Wright, Jeff Kober. Directed by Richard Tuggle. 1986. MPAA: R. (RCA/Columbia cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, SS, 93 min., \$79.95) □*

By Neal Gabler

For many fledgling directors, Alfred Hitchcock is more than a saint—he's an irresistible temptation. Which must be why they slavishly copy his work, hoping to coax the same effects from the same sort of material that Hitchcock had mastered. If only it were that simple. As imitations go, Richard (Tightrope) Tuggle's *Out of Bounds* is slick and serviceably entertaining, but it is also thoroughly familiar.

The thriller is triggered when an Iowa farmboy (Hall), visiting his brother in Los Angeles, inadvertently picks up the wrong bag at the airport. What he discovers inside is a stash of heroin, and that puts him at loggerheads with a sadistic drugrunner. Hall spends the rest of the movie scuttling around

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Los Angeles, evading the dealer and the police. His only ally is a ditzy blonde he's met on the airplane (Wright).

What most of Hitchcock's imitators fail to realize is that for Hitchcock, the form wasn't just a way to goose an audience—it was a way to investigate the soul. *Out of Bounds* doesn't plumb many depths (it doesn't even make much of its farm/city contrast). Hitchcock's plots were pretzels. This one is more like a breadstick.

On the other hand, what keeps this from being total piffle is Anthony Michael Hall. As the geek in *Sixteen Candles* and the nerd in *The Breakfast Club*, Hall established himself as an interesting and unique screen presence—a squirrel. Here, bigger and more sullen, he's matured into a very different kind of presence: diffident and imploded. He's not given much to do, but he manages to make you care about him. I can think of worse reasons to rent a cassette.

### ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL ★★

Christopher Timothy, Robert Hardy, Peter Davison, Carol Drinkwater. Directed by Terence Dudley. 1983. (Playhouse cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 94 min., \$39.98) □

By Curt Gathje

The memoirs of an English veterinarian might seem an unlikely subject for a bestseller or a top-rated TV program, yet James Herriot's '72 book was both these things. In fact, it was made for TV twice, first as a Hallmark Hall of Fame presentation with Anthony Hopkins (which proved so successful that it had a limited theatrical run afterward), and then as a



Man's best friend, English video-style.

13-part BBC series (shown in the US on PBS and some cable services). This video release is taken from the BBC series.

Actually, this is just one episode from that series, billed as a "special" since at 94 minutes it runs longer than the average episode. Because it is but one piece of a larger canvas, it meanders where it should be specific, and it is slow in clarifying relationships between characters. Fans of the

complete series may value this condensation as a memento, but it will be of little help for the uninitiated viewer.

The production itself is of usual English high quality, with good if not particularly inspiring work by the actors. Some minor characters have such thick English accents, however, that you'll be glad your VCR has a rewind button. Surprisingly, there aren't too many animals visible. Instead, the drama lingers over Herriot's domestic readjustments after WWII, while veterinary medicine sneaks in every now and then almost as an afterthought.

This release is a far cry from Herriot's richly anecdotal memoirs. It's merely a chapter for die-hard Herriot fans only.

### WEEKEND WARRIORS ★

Chris Lemmon, Lloyd Bridges, Vic Tayback. Directed by Bert Convy. 1986. MPAA: R. (Lightning cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 88 min., \$79.98)

Here's one theatrical release that aspires to reach the artistic level of a made-for-TV movie—and fails. Director Convy (yes, the Bert Convy) attempts to send up the National Guard in the same anarchic way that *Stripes* took on the Army and *Animal House* tackled college fraternities. As a director, Convy makes a great game-show host.

Color quality varies from shot to shot, picture composition seems to be by accident rather than design, and the acting is of the film-school undergrad variety. (M.T.)



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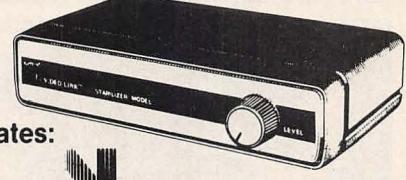
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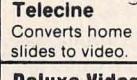
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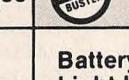
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## CLASSICS

### THE EMPEROR JONES ★★★

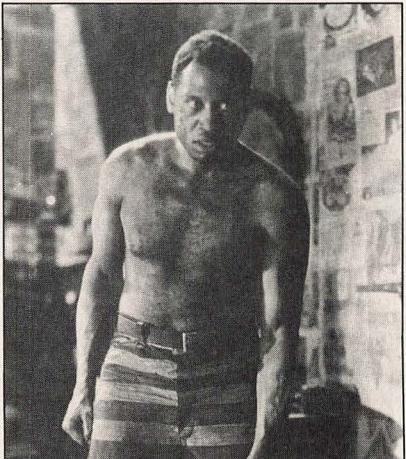
*Paul Robeson, Dudley Digges, Fredi Washington. Directed by Dudley Murphy. 1933. (Embassy cassette, B&W, Hi-Fi mono, 72 min., \$39.95)*

### PAUL ROBESON: TRIBUTE TO AN ARTIST ★★★

*Narrated by Sidney Poitier. Directed by Saul J. Turrell. (Embassy cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 29 min., included with cassette of *The Emperor Jones*, above)*

By Andrew Sarris

Any one of the tragically few screen appearances of the late Paul Robeson is of much more than passing interest. A black



Robeson: a major career wiped out.

giant of a talent eventually crippled by the modern American virus of red-baiting, Robeson struggled earlier against great odds to forge a major acting and concert career endowed with dignity and purpose. The artistic results were very mixed, as can be seen in the now-dated '33 movie version of Robeson's '20s stage incarnation of Eugene O'Neill's Caliban of the Caribbean, *The Emperor Jones*.

Dudley Murphy was an offbeat director of the period, with a highly developed social consciousness that cut him off from the Hollywood mainstream. The early sequences of *The Emperor Jones* display Robeson's cavernous singing voice in a revivalist setting and then take him in brief spasms of boastful vainglory from a job as a Pullman conductor to interludes as playboy, womanizer and gambler on the nightclub and back-alley circuit. Finally, after a brawl with a sexual rival, a stint on a chain gang, an escape, a bit of beefcake in a freighter furnace room

and a swim to freedom, he becomes the lord of his own miniempire in the jungle.

In an age of such mainstream megastars as Richard Pryor, Eddie Murphy and Bill Cosby, it is hard to imagine a time when so many white Americans felt threatened by the sexual potency and political defiance incarnated in this proud artist. Robeson's martyrdom was the Jack Johnson story all over again—but much worse, as is so poignantly revealed in the half-hour documentary about Robeson that's included on Embassy's release with *The Emperor Jones*. Ten of the most potentially productive years of Robeson's career were wiped out by political fiat. Yet to hear Robeson sing the stirring refrain of "Ol' Man River" with ever-changing, ever-prouder, ever-feistier lyrics is to witness the glorious ascent of a man to the spiritual heights of an idea for which he was willing to sacrifice his life. The captious critic, however, may complain that Robeson, as *The Emperor Jones* shows, too often sacrificed subtlety, incisiveness and dramatic vigor in his acting for the sake of imparting a new image of pride, sobriety and honor for his race.

All in all, historical and sociological considerations aside (and these are enormous, to be sure), the total package stacks up as much more than a curiosity, but less than a masterpiece. The overall visual and aural quality of both parts of the cassette is good.

### ROBERTA ★★★★

*Irene Dunne, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Randolph Scott, Helen Westley. Directed by William A. Seiter. 1935. (MGM/UA cassette, B&W, Hi-Fi mono, 109 min., \$29.95)*

### DANCING LADY ★★★

*Joan Crawford, Clark Gable, Franchot Tone, Fred Astaire, Nelson Eddy, Robert Benchley. Directed by Robert Z. Leonard. 1933. (MGM/UA cassette, B&W, Hi-Fi mono, 92 min., \$29.95)*

### BROADWAY MELODY OF 1940 ★★★

*Eleanor Powell, Fred Astaire, George Murphy, Frank Morgan. Directed by Norman Taurog. 1940. (MGM/UA cassette, B&W, Hi-Fi mono, 102 min., \$29.95)*

By Roy Hemming

Bless MGM/UA for finally letting out of the vaults some of the classic B&W musicals that only occasionally turn up on TV's late-night shows (usually in badly faded or scratchy prints). Here are three genuinely interesting oldies in pristine video prints, all

of them featuring Fred Astaire at early- or mid-movie-career stages. Lovers of Golden Age movie musicals should pounce to convince MGM/UA's new owners that such releases are wanted.

*Roberta* was long kept out of circulation because of MGM's color remake, even though that remake ('52's *Lovely to Look At*) was inferior in just about every respect except its color. Some of *Roberta*'s topical '30s references, especially about real and phony post-WWI royalty in Parisian social circles, have lost their effect with the passing years. So, too, has the way Ginger Rogers slyly spoofs the accent and mannerisms of Lyda Roberti, the "blonde bombshell" who played the same role on Broadway. But *Roberta*'s good parts remain gems indeed—thanks to the interplay of an unmatched cast and to one of Jerome Kern's best scores. Astaire and Rogers have essentially second-banana roles but still manage to steal most of the picture with their dances, especially the hoofing routine to "I'll Be Hard to Handle" and a wistfully romantic adagio to "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." Star Dunne handles both the silly story and the great songs beautifully.

*Dancing Lady* marked Astaire's movie debut—a very brief one at that, involving



Astaire, Crawford: "Now, tweest. . . ."

only a couple of numbers with the movie's ever-suffering star, Crawford. Overall, the picture holds up as a better-than-average backstage soap opera, with a score by three of the era's best songwriting teams: Rodgers & Hart, Brown & Freed and McHugh & Fields. In '33 MGM touted the spectacular finale as bigger in the size of its sets and the number of its dancers than any studio had ever done before. Even back then, bigger did not mean better. The numbers are



spectacular, but not as much fun as Busby Berkeley's were for rival Warners during that same period.

*Broadway Melody of 1940*, like so many other '30s and '40s musicals, spends far too much time on its dumb, hackneyed story (about two rival song-and-dance men in love with the same dancer). But it's got a beaut of a score by Cole Porter, plus Astaire and Powell in their only teaming—and in their respective primes. What excitement they create in their stunningly executed "Begin the Beguine," with its unforgettably crisp and glistening B&W cinematography! It remains, for me, the finest single B&W tap-dance number ever filmed by anyone.

Now MGM/UA, how about considering releasing *The Great Ziegfeld*, *Ziegfeld Girl*, *The Cat and the Fiddle* and, most especially, the '36 *Show Boat*?

## MURDER AT THE VANITIES ★★★

*Carl Brisson, Kitty Carlisle, Victor McLaglen, Jack Oakie, Duke Ellington's Orchestra. Directed by Mitchell Leisen. 1934. (MCA cassette, B&W, Hi-Fi mono, 89 min., \$59.95)*

This has become something of a legendary movie, partly because it presents some of the most scantily clad chorines of the era and partly because of a musical number titled "Sweet Marihuana." Filmed in a period when marijuana was not only sometimes spelled differently but was also (like opium) considered an "exotic" subject for stage depiction (in dramas and musicals), both "Sweet Marihuana" and the chorines drew the wrath of many local censors in a year in which the Legion of Decency went on the warpath nationally against movie "permissiveness." To complicate matters, the "Marihuana" number couldn't just be cut from the picture, since a development



Vanities' Oakie (with Sheridan, left).

in the mystery's plot takes place during it. Even today, the movie turns up only rarely on TV because of that number, as well as the fact that its chief players have little "name value" anymore—especially Danish singer Brisson. (Look for a pre-star Ann Sheridan as one of the chorines.)

But *Murder at the Vanities* remains a thoroughly entertaining little melodrama with lots of music, though obvious in its "whodunit" aspects. It's all set backstage at a Broadway performance of the era's popular *Earl Carroll's Vanities*, which vied with the revues of Ziegfeld and George White in the loveliness of the chorines and the ornateness (and/or revelations) of their costumes. Musically, the tame "Sweet Marihuana" number pales besides several others, including "Cocktails for Two" and Ellington's "Ebony Rhapsody"—even if they all give a new dimension to the word "kitsch" in their marvelous silliness. (R.H.)

## COLORIZED

### 42ND STREET ★★★★

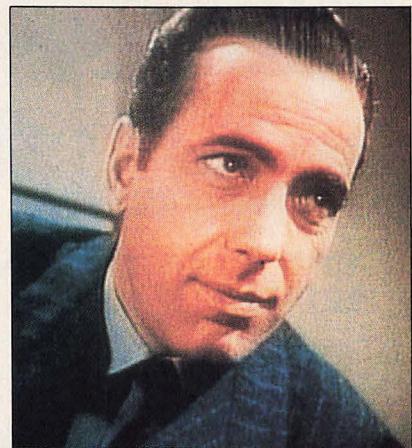
*Warner Baxter, Bebe Daniels, Ruby Keeler, Dick Powell, Ginger Rogers. Directed by Lloyd Bacon. 1933. Colorized 1986. (CBS/Fox cassette, 89 min., simulated stereo, \$59.98)*

By Roy Hemming

If ever a case could be made for colorization, this musical classic does it. The colors are actually reminiscent of '30s Technicolor, especially in the flesh tones, and therefore even the occasional artificiality seems appropriate.

The color conversion (by Color Systems Technology Inc.) gives fresh life to both the overfamiliar story portions of *42nd Street* as well as to the musical numbers, with their period-correct emphasis on pinks, golds and baby blues. Busby Berkeley's geometric dance patterns in the "Young and Healthy" number, in particular, have more impact in color than they ever had in B&W. The only major disappointment is the final part of the big "42nd Street" finale, where an overemphasis on one color (blue) seems a misjudgment and a letdown.

But, by and large, *42nd Street* proves that vintage musicals are much more appropriate choices for colorization than some of the other categories the Turner and Roach organizations have been choosing for their respective processes. And, happily, for those purists who object to *any* colorization, CBS/Fox is keeping in circulation its previously released B&W version of the movie. That way everyone wins.



Bogart: Done in by color?

### D.O.A. ★★

*Edmond O'Brien, Neville Brand, Luther Adler. Directed by Rudolph Mate. 1949. Colorized 1987. (Hal Roach cassette, 83 min., \$19.95)*

### THE MALTESE FALCON ★★

*Humphrey Bogart, Mary Astor, Peter Lorre, Sydney Greenstreet. Directed by John Huston. 1941. Colorized 1987. (CBS/Fox cassette, 101 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$59.98)*

By David J. Elrich

Here are two gritty detective classics from the '40s that are top examples of *film noir* and, for illogical commercial reasons, have now been colorized. If ever there was a contradiction in terms, *film noir* and colorized movies is it!

What made these old movies so good was the harsh reality of their B&W photography. To add a touch of blue or a hint of fuchsia makes absolutely no sense. The only possible justification is that *D.O.A.* may now be viewed by people who won't buy or rent B&W pictures (and there are apparently lots of these folks). As for *Falcon*, I don't think there's a person on the planet who hasn't seen Bogie's movie—so why even bother coloring this great tale of murder and greed for the "black bird"? Since the bird is black, that's about the only thing that looks right in the new cassette.

I've always been a big fan of *D.O.A.*, a fast-paced melodrama concerning a poisoned man frantically searching for his killer. The original B&W version was terrific, and colorization adds nothing. Watch this one for its action and for a great acting job by O'Brien.

Colorization may be appropriate for some movies, but definitely not these two.

## TOPPER RETURNS ★★★

*Joan Blondell, Roland Young, Billie Burke, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson. Directed by Roy Del Ruth. 1941. Colorized 1987. (Hal Roach cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 83 min., \$19.95)*

## TERROR BY NIGHT ★★

*Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, Alan Mowbray. Directed by William Neill. 1946. Colorized 1987. (Hal Roach cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 68 min., \$19.95)*

By Glenn Kenny

Controversy over colorized B&W movies continues unabated. And so does colorization itself. Now comes the second *Topper* movie to be colorized (in fact, the original *Topper* was the first colorized movie ever) and the first *Sherlock Holmes*



"Elementary coloring, my dear Watson."

movie to undergo the computer color treatment. Neither one of these flicks is *Citizen Kane*, so no one is kicking and screaming about "tampering" or "desecrating." At least *I'm* not.

In combining two vintage movie genres—the drawing-room mystery and the slightly absurdist comedy—*Topper Returns* scores on both counts. It's slight to be sure, but sassy as well—thanks mostly to Joan Blondell's snappy performance as a ghost who enlists the hapless Topper (Young) in solving her own murder. Burke, as Topper's dizzy, henpecking wife, is once again delightfully two bricks short of a load, and Anderson gives some exemplary demonstrations of "take" humor. The murder house is replete with trap doors and hidden passages, adding to the confusion brought about by the ghost only Topper can see. It's all fun throughout, with a generally good colorizing job.

*Terror By Night* never was the best *Sherlock Holmes* movie by a long shot. It neither loses nor gains from the colorization process. While the color is remarkably

consistent and surprisingly vivid, *Terror* remains a pedestrian mystery, notable only for the fact that Bruce's Dr. Watson is made out to be more of a moron than usual.

## INTERNATIONAL

### MAEDCHEN IN UNIFORM ★★★

*Hertha Thiele, Dorothea Wieck. Directed by Leontine Sagan. 1931. (Embassy cassette, in German, with English subtitles, Hi-Fi mono, 87 min., \$29.95)*

By Curt Gathje

This legendary cult classic has earned its place in movie history as one of the first sound pictures written, directed and acted exclusively by women. But it's better known for having been originally banned in America because of an underlying theme, the portrayal of a lesbian affair. The movie then became a cause celebre in New York when the ban was overturned by a state court—and, after receiving ecstatic reviews from major critics, went on to be voted one of the year's best. In other words, it was the *Blue Velvet* of its time.

The story's shock value may be lost on contemporary viewers, who might well wonder what the fuss was all about 55 years ago. Set in a strict Prussian boarding school, the story centers on a motherless girl who falls in love with her teacher. Although called the "first truly radical lesbian film," this is veiled, coy radicalism. There are dead-giveaway looks and gestures, to be sure, and schoolgirlish declarations of love, but the narrative essentially side-steps the lesbian question, focusing instead on a broader conflict between authoritarianism and humanism with an almost Dickensian fervor—and admirable conviction.



Maedchen: An early-'30s *Blue Velvet*?

The video version has been pieced together from two different prints, with different sets of subtitles. There were several translations of this international hit in the decades following its original release (Colette wrote the French titles). The original English version was by Donald Freeman, then managing editor of *Vanity Fair*. His titles appear toward the end of the cassette, easily spotted because they are set in a different typeface and are much pithier than those preceding them. It's too bad Freeman's entire translation isn't available for video. Not as easily forgiven is the poor visibility of the subtitles themselves, often unreadable against white backgrounds.



Wajda's *Kanal*: war as sewage disposal.

### KANAL ★★★★

*Teresa Izewskqa, Tadeusz Janczar, Emil Karewicz. Directed by Andrzej Wajda. 1956. (Embassy cassette, B&W, Hi-Fi mono, 96 min., available in dubbed or subtitled versions, \$29.95)*

Wajda's *Kanal* remains one of the most overpowering of all the movies that have dealt with the human impact of WWII. Set in Warsaw right after the abortive uprising of 1944, the movie follows a group of Home Front resistance fighters as they desperately try to elude the Nazis through the labyrinth of sewers beneath Warsaw—a city then being systematically demolished on Hitler's orders. There are many deliberate parallels to Dante's *Inferno*, but Wajda keeps the focus on unforgettable characters caught between hope and despair, finding wartime life just one booby trap after another.

Wajda, perhaps understandably for a Polish filmmaker in '56, skirts the long-debated "delay" by the nearby Soviet army in coming to Warsaw's aid. (The destruction of the Home Front helped assure postwar Soviet control of Poland.) But the human dimension of his drama is searingly exposed. Together with Wajda's *Ashes and Diamonds* (also from Embassy; reviewed in the November '86 VR), *Kanal* says as much about the toll of war on human beings as has any movie, including *Platoon*. (R.H.)

## DISCS

### SWING TIME ★ ★ ★ ★

*Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Victor Moore, Helen Broderick. Directed by George Stevens. 1936/86. (Criterion LV disc, SP, B&W, stereo, no set running time, \$74.95)*

By David Hajdu

For everybody sick of special effects and synthesizers, here is some video high tech used not for its own sake but for the sake of old-fashioned musical romance.

*Swing Time* is the sixth of the Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers musicals and, for me, it's the most mature and moving. The movie has long been praised for its winning ensemble playing, its gorgeous (but not really swinging) score of now-standard tunes by Jerome Kern and Dorothy Fields (including "A Fine Romance" and the Oscar-winning "The Way You Look Tonight"), its stunning deco sets and, of course, the incomparable dancing of Astaire and Rogers, choreographed by Hermes Pan and Astaire.

Now, in a special edition of *Swing Time* with additional video and audio materials, laser disc technology provides movie buffs with a viewing experience that enriches the appreciation of the movie without spoiling its magic through excessive analysis. The audio essay included here as an alternative soundtrack, the collateral text and the still photos which follow the movie are not an autopsy. Rather, they help breathe new life into a still vital movie released 51 years ago.



Rogers, Astaire: fresh life in new media.

In particular, John Mueller's commentary is the most cogent and witty material of its type on any of Criterion's releases to date. Mueller's dance criticism is especially revealing, but he's also solid as a movie historian—and he knows the video medium, too. For instance, with description, still pictures and pointed attention to strains of background music, Mueller helps us men-

tally piece together a number, "It's Not in the Cards," originally included as the movie's opening sequence but subsequently cut and destroyed. Mueller also suggests when the viewer's use of LV freeze-frame or slow-motion would add to the appreciation of a dance scene.

Additionally, there's a charming clip from *Hooray for Love*, the '35 movie with Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and Fats Waller—specifically, a scene which partly inspired Astaire's "Bojangles of Harlem" number in *Swing Time*.



Original Invasion victims: short-changed.

### INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS ★ ★ ★

*Kevin McCarthy, Dana Wynter, King Donovan, Carolyn Jones. Directed by Don Siegel. 1956/86. (Criterion LV disc, SP, B&W, stereo, no set running time, \$74.95)*

Despite some notable production achievements, several problems hold back this presentation from the level of excellence of other Criterion releases.

Technically, Criterion's transfer from 35mm negative to video is sterling. Moreover, this transfer retains the full wide-screen proportions of the original movie, by employing the letterboxing technique of adding black space above and below the screen image. The effect is especially powerful in the case of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, a movie in which the broad, cold landscapes that stretch beyond the central figures make extremely evocative and important cinematic statements.

The main problem lies with the audio essay included in this disc production as an alternative soundtrack. It includes some of the most agonizingly cerebral and preposterously picayune movie "interpretation" I've ever heard or read.

The supplementary material included after the movie is also disappointing, compared with the material on other recent Criterion releases. All that appears here are

the original theatrical trailer, a demonstration of letterboxing, and the transcript of a published interview with director Siegel, plus the standard Criterion bibliography. Maybe we're all expecting too much from Criterion discs at this point. But, hey, Criterion itself single-handedly created the standards by which videophile releases, including its own, must now be judged. (D.H.)

### INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM ★ ★ ★

*Harrison Ford, Kate Capshaw, Ke Huy Quan. Directed by Steven Spielberg. 1984. MPAA: PG-13. (Two Paramount LV discs, digital, 118 min., \$49.95)*

By David J. Elrich

Indy has been around on video for a while and has sold tons of cassettes. What makes this new laser disc edition so special is its spectacular digital sound. When cars whoosh along the underground tracks in one of the movie's myriad chase scenes, you can almost *feel* them careening around the curves. Color reproduction is also topnotch, especially in the opening dance numbers and the hilarious "banquet" scene.

So why just three stars above? Since this is a CAV (standard play) version rather than CLV (extended play), Paramount gives with one hand and takes away with the other. With CAV, for example, an entire world of great special effects (including still-step and slow-motion down to  $1/16$ th speed) is open to viewers—and is a lot of fun given the outlandish stunts performed throughout *Temple of Doom*. But the negative side is that



Ford as Indy: misplaced side break.

almost two hours' worth of breakneck entertainment is broken up at three places where you must flip the discs. Two of the interruptions come at acceptable points, but a third comes right in the middle of a cliffhanger! A poor choice, to say the least. But, oh, that wonderful sound and those special effects!

## PERFORMANCE

### PARAMOUNT COMEDY THEATER, VOL. 2: DECENT EXPOSURES ★★

Howie Mandel, Marsha Warfield, Doug Ferrari, Paul Feig, Joe Alaskey, Directed by Joe Hostettler. 1987. (Paramount cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, 67 min., \$29.95)

By Maury Z. Levy

There is a theory I have about shopping malls. The commercial success of a mall runs in directly inverse proportion to the number of chain shoe stores. Simply, when things aren't working well, start turning the cheap tricks. Comedy, "adult" comedy, is like that nowadays. If you can't make them laugh with solid humor, start talking dirty. Then they'll laugh out of pure nervous naughtiness. And, what the hey, a laugh's a laugh, right? Not this time.

The first *Paramount Comedy Theater*, a topnotch made-for-video effort hosted by Mandel and featuring some very sharp young comics, was truly worth saving. (It won our '87 ViRA.) There are parts I've seen 10 times and still exit laughing. By contrast, *Vol. 2* comes off more like the lounge act for *Vol. 1*.

Mandel is funny as the emcee, but there's not enough of him. There's too much of Marsha Warfield, a *Night Court* cast member who tries her best to be Richard Pryor. She does half the job—the language is bad enough, but the jokes aren't very good. Other players include Doug Ferrari (a Jay Leno soundalike), Paul Feig (Pee-wee Herman goes *GQ*) and Joe Alaskey, an impressionist who's pretty decent doing Don Knotts as Abe Lincoln and Jack Nicholson as Eddie Haskell. Alaskey is as good as this tape gets.

Don't get us wrong—this release is certainly worth a look or a night's rental. Actually, it rates higher than most TV sitcoms. It's just that Paramount got off to such a flying start with *Vol. 1* that this one suffers in comparison. But you judge for yourself. You can pick it up at the video store in the mall. It's right next to the shoe store.

### STEVEN WRIGHT COMEDY SPECIAL ★★

Steven Wright, *people who paid to see him*. 1986. (Vestron cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 54 min., \$59.95)

You've seen him almost alive on *The Tonight Show*. His loony lethargy has served as a night light for Letterman. And now Steven Wright, a very improper Bostonian who has to borrow clothes from friends, has taped his own special, originally shown on HBO. Those without cable but with a good sense of the perverse will want this cassette.

Taped at a small club (Wolfgang's in San Francisco) with a live audience, the show

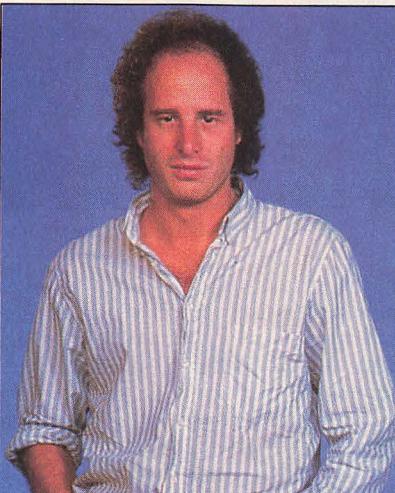
has a certain intimacy that lends itself to the home screen. And, luckily, the audience is live. The 29-year-old Wright has a realistic style that leaves 'em laughing and him hardly breathing. To say he's laid-back would be adding undue excitement to his delivery. He's a stand-up comic who sounds as though he barely has the energy to stand. But that's Wright's shtick—speak softly and carry a big microphone.

Wright is very strange, and, if you acquire the taste, very funny:

"I went to a place to eat. The menu said,



Mandel: Not enough this time?



Wright: But is he breathing?

'Breakfast any time,' so I ordered French toast during the Renaissance."

"Today I saw a subliminal advertising executive, but just for a second."

"You can't have everything. Where would you put it?"

This cassette has about everything you need to appreciate the bizarre humor of one of America's hottest, most original comedians. So maybe you can have it all. Where do you put it? In your VCR. Just make sure to plug it in first. Steven Wright comes with batteries not included. (M.Z.L.)

### BIG CITY COMEDY ★

John Candy, Martin Mull, Billy Crystal. Directed by Mark Warren. 1986. (Vestron cassette, 56 min., \$59.95)

By Glenn Kenny

*Big City Comedy* is a compilation of "best bits" from a TV series Candy hosted a few years back, presumably when he was on hiatus from his stint as a regular in the SCTV troupe. The show was syndicated for a while but never caught on, and given what's presented here it's easy to see why.

*Big City Comedy* is a dull, sometimes excruciating demonstration that even people who are genuinely gifted and funny can miss the mark wildly at times. Candy himself struggles mightily but can't transcend bad writing, a numbskull supporting troupe, and a cheesy "let's-do-a-skit-with-our-guest-comics-and-then-chat-a-bit" format. As if it isn't enough to see Candy being misused these days in the same sort of bad comedies SCTV used to parody, this tape shows his past wasn't stellar either.

### THAT'S SINGING: THE BEST OF BROADWAY ★★★

Ethel Merman, Chita Rivera, Alexis Smith, many others. Directed by Rob Iscove. 1982. (Karl-Lorimar cassette, 90 min., \$19.95)

By Roy Hemming

Any program that can put together the original stars of some 20 Broadway shows to re-create their showstopping numbers is a showstopper in itself—especially at this cassette's budget price.

It was originally produced for cable TV in '82 under the more appropriate title *Broadway Showstoppers*. A bit curious is the cutting of a song by Mary Martin (from *The Sound of Music*), even though she's pictured on the tape box and shows up (only in long shot) for the curtain calls.

In any case, there's much more than just good singing here. Two of the best numbers are dance routines from *Bye Bye Birdie* and *Over Here!* with the marvelous American Dance Machine.

Sondheim fans will especially relish Glynis Johns and Len Cariou's definitive version of "Send In the Clowns" from *A Little Night Music* and Alexis Smith's sophisticatedly saucy "Could I Leave You?" from *Follies*. There are numbers from *House of Flowers*, *Grease*, *Godspell*, *The Fantasticks*, *Gypsy*, *Ain't Misbehavin'* and *Annie Get Your Gun*—and that's not the complete list!

The staging is routine TV-revue style and the orchestra, led by Bob Rosengarten, has a TVish sound, without the brightness and zip of most Broadway-show albums. Even so, no lover of Broadway musicals will want to be without this video record of top stars in some of their most memorable numbers.

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# MUSIC

**THE PRINCE'S TRUST ALL-STAR ROCK CONCERT ★★**  
*Paul McCartney, Elton John, Eric Clapton, Phil Collins, others. Directed by David G. Croft. 1986. (MGM/UA cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, 58 min., \$29.95)*

By Robert Christgau  
and Carola Dibbell

Though they're all older or balder than the real royalty in the house, the four rock 'n' rollers who do the intros for this charity-concert video—McCartney, Clapton, John and Collins—seem somewhat giddy with the novelty of performing for Prince Charles and his consort. The ex-

however, provide the program's one priceless moment, as Di and Charles are glimpsed for just a few moments shaking their moneymakers to "Long Tall Sally." Hers begins at the neck and ends at the ankles. Charles, shifting his weight from foot to foot, looks as if he would gladly trade his kingdom for a horse.

**SOUL TO SOUL ★★**

*Wilson Pickett, Santana, Staples Singers, Ike and Tina Turner. Directed by Denis Sanders. 1971. (Atlantic cassette, Hi-Fi stereo, 95 min., \$24.95)*

By Jim Farber

Originally released theatrically in the fall of '71 and rarely seen since then, *Soul to Soul* must rate as one of the great unsung



An All-Star cast to help Charles and Di shake their moneymakers.

hilaration lasts, too. This sort of superstar pickup gig usually breeds sloppiness and self-congratulation, but with nonsubject Tina Turner, cocky and relaxed in her second life, the show starts on an up. By the time Mark Knopfler swaggers through "Money for Nothing" (with the notorious "little faggot" line replaced by "little queen" for the occasion), the supersession band has gouged something like a groove out of the situation.

Midway through, unfortunately, sloppiness and self-congratulation do take over. Elton has the temerity to come back from "Your Song" with one of his anonymous current hits, and Rod Stewart's "Sailing" drips with false noblesse oblige. When George Michael rushes on late and breathless to duet with Paul Young, it turns out that the only Young song he knows is the one Young has already done, and he doesn't know it all that well. From this low point, McCartney's all-oldies finale fails to provide the intended lift. It does,

concert movies of all time. It is chock-a-block with great musical performances, capturing an important period in black music, sadly gone, but it also has broader cultural significance.

Almost half of the movie's 95 minutes are given over to the stars' travels in Ghana. We see them mingle with local musicians and townspeople, exploring the original African roots of American soul. Interestingly, director Sanders captures this without relying too heavily on the conventions of movie travelogs. There's no intrusive narrator and few interviews. Instead many times the camera simply follows the stars, wordlessly roaming the streets as local music fills the soundtrack. Without undue explanation, we see Tina Turner learn a tricky native singing style, Eddie Harris encounter a bizarre local percussionist named Amoa, and Roberta Flack exploring an old slave-herding castle as her own "Freedom Song" plays in the background.

Unfortunately, we don't get to hear any

contemporary African bands (such as outfits which marry native styles to modern electric instruments). Instead, just traditional music is featured. Still, Sanders' general music-dominated approach makes a powerful point: that rhythm can tie people together where language can threaten to keep them apart.

That point is rousing underscored during the main concert sequences. The Ghanaian crowd goes nuts for Wilson Pickett's desperate "Midnight Hour," Ike and Tina's racy "River Deep, Mountain High" and Santana's entire set. Still, to these ears, perhaps the biggest mindblower of all is the Staples Singers' angry "When Will We Be Paid?" A finer definition of soul has yet to be recorded.

### THE QUINTESSENTIAL PEGGY LEE ★★

*Peggy Lee, Mike Renzi, John Chiodini, Mark Stevens. Directed by Gary Halvorson. 1984. (Pioneer Artists LV disc, stereo, 57 min., \$24.95)*

By Christie Barter

Peggy Lee is phenomenal! Here she is, 50-some years after her beginnings as a big-band singer, captivating an audience of high rollers in Atlantic City with an act successfully tailored for the mid-'80s.

That's not to say that her repertory here comprises songs of today. Far from it. They range from some of her first hits, such as "Manana" (which she wrote in '47 with her then-husband Dave Barbour), to more recent signature tunes of the '60s, "Is That All There Is?" and "Fever"—songs that will be forever hers. Admittedly, Lee's vocal range and her expressive range have diminished with the years. But she's a survivor—sounding somehow very contemporary and backed by a quintet of first-rate musicians (she's always known how to pick 'em).

Available, for the moment, only on video-disc, this hour-long program employs no visual tricks, just a straight-ahead, available-light shooting accompanied by good, clean digital sound.

### S A T I R E

#### RONNIE DEAREST ★★

*Ronald Reagan, Nancy Reagan, George Murphy, Errol Flynn, Olivia De Havilland. Produced and edited by Ira Gallen. 1986. (Video Resources cassette, B&W and color, 45 min., \$19.95)*

By William K. Everson

Attempts to "camp up" old footage usually don't work too well because the geniuses behind them merely want to make a fast buck out of old clips, care nothing about print quality, and care less—or know less—about creative editing skills. *Ronnie Dearest* may

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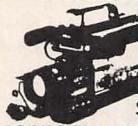
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### Which VCR Game is "VERY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED" by VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE?

The following is a direct reprint of an article ran in the December 1986 issue of VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE by David Hajdu, rating all VCR Games.

#### VIDEO TRIVIALITIES

For ages 12 to adult. Two to eight players. Video Trivialities, Inc.

Good thing I got the review copy of this game for free. Otherwise I would have never discovered this "closet classic" of the VCR-game genre.

Produced and distributed independently by a tiny West Coast concern, *Video Trivialities* is almost impossible to find. Worse still, its package design is so gross that nobody with the brains to play the game would buy it.

The game itself, though, is an entertaining and enduring mixture of video and game play. Like many other great games, *Video Trivialities* is deceptively simple in conception. It features a book of trivia questions that players try to answer in order to make their way along a game-board path. Video comes in only to offer the answer to the wide-ranging questions in the form of vintage black-and-white newsreel footage.

In terms of interactivity, *Video Trivialities* doesn't even try. So I can't say it fails. How it succeeds wonderfully is through its newsreel footage. For everyone with whom I played the game, the visuals proved surprisingly fascinating and fun.

Also, the level of *Trivialities* trivia is appropriate for almost any group of adults, unlike the overly difficult, easy or bizarre questions of certain other trivia games.

Finally, five additional cassettes are available for use with *Video Trivialities* once the original cassette runs out. No other VCR game from any manufacturer offers this invaluable advantage.

This one's rather cheap- and stupid-looking. But very highly recommended.



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irk those who, on principle, hate to see scenes yanked out of context. But as a tongue-in-cheek political spoof and as an often-outrageous video mosaic of the Reagans, this one is well done.

Clips are taken from such odd public domain features as *Santa Fe Trail* and *This Is the Army*, as well as from Reagan movie outtakes (Ronnie swearing with color but not off-color). There are also scenes from several of Reagan's wartime service training and propaganda films (Reagan as a padre, or as a careless pilot who shoots at his own men!).

In order to tie all this together, the producers bought a chunk of Reagan-Davis footage from the copyrighted *Hellcats of the Navy* and reworked scenes so that the Reagans talk to each other about more recent topics, show old home movies and give you a tour of their house (the latter courtesy of one of several old commercials). The intercutting is often worthy of Griffith, and the overlaying of lines of dialog from different sources often tremendously effective. It's a short tape, but it's all prime stuff.

While it's a fun tape, perhaps best suited for parties, it might also be recommended as an entertaining teaching tool, particularly in showing just what *can* be achieved by editing. The spoof aspects extend to the colorful and elaborate tape box, in which the faces of the Reagans are superimposed over those of Gary Cooper and Paulette Goddard in an ad for Cecil B. DeMille's *Unconquered*. Pictorial and sound qualities are both excellent. A recommended novelty.

## THE ARTS

**THE MARIA CALLAS CONCERTS 1959, 1962** ★★★★  
*Maria Callas, North German Radio Symphony, conducted by Nicolo Rescigno and Georges Pretre. Directed by Alfred Johnst. B&W. 1959/1962.*  
*(Kultur cassettes, Hi-Fi mono, 136 min., \$39.95; Pioneer LV disc, mono, 176 min., \$39.95)*

By Allan Kozinn

Callas was the quintessential diva—temperamental, colorful, often controversial, but possessed of a communicative gift that allowed her to transform an aria, whether great or commonplace, into a thoroughly moving experience. This quality has always leapt from the grooves of Callas' recordings, which continue to win admiration from generations of listeners who never heard the soprano live. By adding the visual dimension, these two Hamburg recital tapes put the Callas legend in a special perspective—and give us a clearer understanding of what made her performances so special.

Vocally, she is in fine shape in the '59 concert and a bit less glorious in the one from '62. But vocal splendor (of which there is

plenty here) is nearly beside the point. Rather, one is captivated by Callas' bearing and her use of gesture—facial, physical and vocal—to suggest the naked emotions at the heart of her 11 selections. She runs the gamut of expression here, from flirtatiousness to jealousy, anger and despair, all of which she manages to convey completely and convincingly, without the aid of costumes or staging.

On the program area a handful of Callas specialties (excerpts from Spontini's *La Vestale* and Bellini's *Il Pirata*), as well as sev-



Callas: flirtatious to despairing.

eral more broadly beloved operatic favorites (from Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, Bizet's *Carmen* and Verdi's *Don Carlo*).

Both cassette and disc formats offer a crisp black-and-white picture and clean, solid mono sound, although in both areas the LV disc has a slight edge in clarity (not to mention the convenience of random access). Both formats also offer every last curtain call. But the disc version also includes five overtures that were recorded during these performances and deleted from the cassette version.

There are some other filmed and taped Callas performances in the vaults—her '58 Paris debut recital and an electrifying second-act *Tosca* (with Tito Gobbi) at Covent Garden in '64. These would make an ideal follow-up to this spectacular set.

## REFLECTIONS OF A DANCER—ALEXANDRA DANILOVA

★★★  
*Alexandra Danilova, Frederic Franklin. Directed by Anne Belle. 1986. (Seahorse cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 52 min., \$69.95)*

By Clive Barnes

It seems unbelievable but, as far as I know, there are no film or tape records of the great prima ballerina Alexandra Danilova in performance, although she retired from active dancing only as recently as 1957. It is as though we had no audio recordings of, say, Rosa Ponselle. Unthinkable.

# Portrait of the Great American Investor

The irony is that just before World War II, Warner Brothers Studios made a couple of modestly effective movie shorts with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. They were directed by Jean Negulesco and included Massine's ballet *Gaite Parisienne*. Tragically, Danilova, then a star of that company, was not regarded as photogenic, so her famous role as the glove seller was handed to a superficially prettier dancer.

This documentary of Danilova's teaching and coaching in recent years, together with her chatting about her life and career, is no real substitute for a glimpse of "Choura" herself in full flight. But it will have to suffice. And it really does make an interesting movie. Danilova's remarks about her life are conventional enough. People who want more would do better to buy her recently published autobiography, *Choura*. But the clips of her teaching at the School of American Ballet, looking as immaculate as ever, and of her staging the old Petipa ballet *Paquita* with her longtime partner Frederic Franklin for the Cincinnati Ballet are priceless.

What you get in this release—and it is a most valuable lesson—is a sense of ballet's traditions, the way choreography is passed on from generation to generation. And if you watch and listen, you will acquire insight into that one inner mystery of the dance: style. (Seahorse is at 12 Harrison St., New York, NY 10013.)

## DOCUMENTARY

### THE MARCH OF TIME: SHOW BUSINESS AT WAR (1939-1946) ★★★★

Produced by Louis de Rochemont.  
1939-46. (Embassy cassette, B&W,  
Hi-Fi mono, 73 min., \$24.95)

By Leonard Maltin

There was a time when every trip to the movies meant seeing not just a featured picture, but also a program of "selected short subjects." One of the all-time best short series was *The March of Time* (initiated by *Time* magazine's founders). It was to the ordinary newsreel what *60 Minutes* and *20/20* are to the nightly TV newscasts of today: an opportunity to examine subjects in greater depth, to provide some background and context to go along with the headlines.

Embassy has compiled some of the 20-minute shorts into thematic programs for home video, and this show-business cassette is bound to be one of the most popular. It consists of four separate shorts: *The Movies March On* is a good pop history of motion pictures, with vintage film clips and some unexpected behind-the-scenes shots such as Frank Capra on the set of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*; *Show Business at War* has everything from John Ford screening Armed Forces footage to a soldier dancing



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with Marlene Dietrich at the Hollywood Canteen; *Upbeat in Music* takes us to the stage of the Metropolitan Opera and then to a 52nd Street nightclub for rare footage of piano genius Art Tatum; and *Challenge to Hollywood* is an interesting review of the British film industry, with such stars as banjo-strumming George Formby and legendary executive J. Arthur Rank.

Here is one *Time* capsule worth owning. There's so much crammed into this program that it demands to be seen more than once. I can't wait to see the rest of the series.

## INFO VID

### A GUIDE TO GOOD COOKING, VOL. III ★★★★

*Jacques Pepin. Directed by Lee Kraft.*  
(Videocraft Classics cassette, 60 min., \$39.95)

By Deirdre Condon

*Tres bien.* Master chef and teacher Jacques Pepin prepares another fine meal to delight our minds as well as our stomachs.

Few experts can get away with standing in a fairly static position in front of the camera and talking for an hour. That usually gets boring after 10 minutes. But Pepin easily pulls off the feat. He's so comfortable in his kitchen that nothing, not even a videocamera, could phase him in his milieu. He's also a great natural teacher, who doesn't need fancy camera angles nor dazzling graphics to hold our attention. Just give him some ingredients and let him talk.

No matter what your level of culinary skill, you'll learn something from this tape. People who go into the kitchen only for a glass of water can learn the basics of technique. Accomplished cooks can learn *why* what they've been doing is correct.

Don't make the mistake of assuming that because Pepin is French, the food prepared here is fussy and fancy; it's not. The menu consists of good, hearty food that's easy to prepare. He bakes lamb, and tells us about the different kinds of lamb and how to de-bone it properly. He also prepares fried eggplant, carrots with basil, salad with vinaigrette dressing, and an apple tart for dessert.

Anyway, you can't help but like a chef who toasts to our happiness at the end of his tape. *Merci, Jacques.*

### A PROFESSIONAL APPROACH TO VIDEO WEDDINGS ★★

*No director credited. 1986. (Alpha Video Services cassette, 30 min., \$29.95)*

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circle No. 30 on Reader Service Card.

wedding with your own home video gear, as a gift to the bride and groom, or want to pick up extra cash on weekends, you can learn to create a polished, professional tape by spending some time with this how-to video. It's well-made and right to the point. It covers the equipment a wedding taper needs, the angles for the best shots during a ceremony and a reception, and how to edit the tape (including some cute nuances such as finishing off the tape with the words, "The Beginning").

The program shows a finished excerpt from a wedding tape and then briefly discusses how much you should charge if you're planning to do this as an income earner. Wedding tapers can get \$200 for a bare-bones tape, and up to \$2,000 for a tape with all the extras. (In other words, you can profit from marriage almost as much as Joanna Carson.)

A few of the problems inherent in videotaping weddings with half-inch format equipment are inadvertently shown in the tape—such as variations in color and brightness, the flatness of the picture and the less-than-studio-quality sound—though these are never discussed. But the tape itself does provide a realistic idea of the kind of quality you can expect.

Of all the how-to tapes I've seen (and I've seen hundreds), this one packs more practical information into a half-hour than most do in twice that time. (AVS is at 5142 Warner Ave., Huntington Beach, CA 92649.) (D.C.)

## KID VID

### THE HOMER PRICE STORIES ★★★

Directed by Beth Sandford, Edward English, Gary Templeton. 1987. (CC Studios cassette, 40 min., \$29.95)

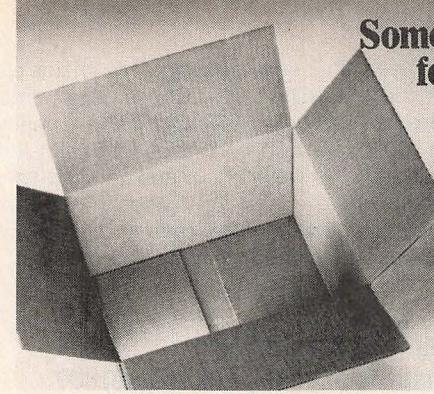
By Randi Hacker

Kids under 11 will definitely like the two stories on this cassette, but a couple of things will have to be explained to most of them in advance: in what year the story takes place and why two different boys play Homer.

Author Robert McCloskey set his Homer Price stories in the 1930s in fictional Centerburg, a small town two miles from where Route 56 meets Route 56A. Homer is a 10-year-old boy with a crew cut. He lives with his parents in a house right next to the garage his father owns. The video faithfully reproduces the era. There are strange-looking gas pumps and Studebakers, and little boys listening to the radio instead of watching television.

But the viewer is never oriented in time. The story opens and that's that. This could be especially confusing to younger viewers

*Randi Hacker is editor of The Electric Company, a magazine published by Children's Television Workshop.*



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whose sense of history is limited to last week. A short explanation from parents before hitting the play button will be needed to take care of this.

Then there's Homer himself. In the first story he has short reddish hair and is played by a short, reddish boy. In the second story, his hair is longer and blonder and he is taller. For continuity's sake, it would have been better if both stories had featured the same young actor as Homer.

These two complaints aside, the stories are charming. In the first, "The Doughnuts," Homer, on a visit to his Uncle Ulysses' diner downtown, tries his hand at making a few doughnuts while his uncle goes out. Things go wrong with the doughnut machine, which won't stop making doughnuts. Then a rich lady customer accidentally drops her bracelet in the dough. Kids will love the way Homer solves the twin problems of finding the bracelet and selling all the doughnuts.

The second story, "The Cosmic Comic," is not as good as the first one, mainly because Homer doesn't have such a big part. It's more about his friend Freddy and the Super Duper, Freddy's superhero who appears in comic books and movie serials. When the actor who plays the Super Duper comes to Homer's town and drives his car into a ditch, the boys are called upon to rescue a guy they thought could lift a car with one hand.

Parents and kids can watch *The Homer Price Stories* together. They're charmingly done, have a nice sense of humor and will probably inspire some kids to check the books out of the library if their parents don't get there first.

**BABY SONGS ★★★★**  
*Animated and live-action footage.*  
Various directors. 1984. (Hi-Tops cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 30 min., \$14.95)

By Genevieve Kazdin

It isn't often a tape comes along made especially for toddlers ages two to four. It's rarer that such a tape is so very, very good.

Hap and Martha Palmer have written 10 delightful songs that viewers in this age group can easily relate to. *Piggy Toes*, *Share* and *My Mommy Comes Back* are playful and sweet. *Security* is a paean in praise of a security blanket. All the others are equally appropriate. Deserving of special mention: *Today I Took My Diapers Off*. This segment not only encourages toddlers through the toilet-training struggle, but also provides some of the most smile-provoking, heartwarming children's video I've seen.

Each song is introduced by an animated segment and one song is performed by a puppet, but all others feature live-action footage of real toddlers. This variety of visual approaches should help keep very young viewers interested.



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## TODDLER TUNES AND TALES ★★

*Doug Goodkin, Joan Sutton. Directed by Miriam Goodman. 1987. (Quality Time cassette, 45 min., \$29.95)*

*Toddler Tunes* is chock full of good ideas that somehow fall flat. Subtitled *Music and Movement for Kids 2 to 4 Years Old*, the tape features Goodkin demonstrating how to "feel" the rhythm of music, how to move to the beat and how to begin to hear what music is all about. A small playgroup of children from the San Francisco School follow his instructions on camera.

Goodkin speaks slowly and clearly. He's easy to understand. His segment on clapping is sure to have every viewer practicing the sounds two hands can make. There are also storytelling sessions featuring Sutton.

So far, okay. But the spark that would raise the program to something special is missing. I think that's because producer-director Goodman simply tried too hard. The children seem overrehearsed and overfamiliar with the material. Spontaneous squeals of delight from the kids might have communicated so much more to the viewer and encouraged at-home participation.

According to the packaging, material with tips for parents will be included with the tape. It was not with the advance copy I watched. (Quality Time is at 274 Funston Ave., San Francisco, CA 94118.) (G.K.)

## STORYBOOK SERIES, VOL. 3: THE RELUCTANT DRAGON ★★★

*Hayley Mills and the voices of John Carradine, George Gobel, Louis Nye. Directed by Sam Weiss, Stu Rosen. 1987. (Hi-Tops cassette, Hi-Fi mono, 30 min., \$12.95)*

Hi-Tops' animated *Storybook Series* continues with three well-chosen stories.

Hostess Mills tells us that these tales illustrate various aspects of change—and they do. They also provide good entertainment for children of ages five to eight.

*The Reluctant Dragon* is a familiar kids' story. We see the big, scary-looking, poetry-reading dragon strike a deal with St. George and thereby convince a terrified town that he's no threat at all. It's a sweet story, making the point that appearances can sometimes be deceiving.

*Someone New* is a subtle and reassuring look at the types of changes that occur as kids grow up. For instance, moving from kindergarten to first grade (*real school*) may mean putting away babyish toys and babyish behavior. Why this is not only okay, but also right and good is made gently clear.

*The Ghost in the Shed* deals with backyard skeletons, ghostly door slammin's, table rappings and other eerie occurrences. Even though it all comes to a peaceful, satisfying end, this tale may be too intense for very young viewers, so it should be previewed by parents in advance.

Mills is a cheerful hostess who speaks directly to the viewers, encourages them to go to the library, to read, to seek out special books. How wonderful! (G.K.)

## ANIMATION

### ELMER FUDD'S COMEDY CAPERS ★★★

*Elmer Fudd, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck. Directed by Friz Freleng, Chuck Jones, Robert McKimson. 1986 compilation. (Warner cassette, 57 min., \$17.98)*

### FOGHORN LEGHORN'S FRACTURED FUNNIES ★★★

*Foghorn Leghorn, Prissy Hen, Henery*

*Hawk. Directed by Chuck Jones, Robert McKimson. 1986 compilation. (Warner cassette, 58 min., \$17.98)*

### PEPE LE PEW'S SKUNK TALES ★★★★

*Pepe Le Pew. Directed by Arthur Davis, Abe Levitow, Chuck Jones. 1986 compilation. (Warner cassette, 56 min., \$17.98)*

By David Hajdu

If you're gonna pay \$17.98 for something that's long been on TV for free, there had better be a good reason. There is here.

You could put together your own anthology tapes like these, recording them from their virtually perpetual syndication broadcasts. If so, you could stick to one character per tape, instead of slipping in one cartoon in each anthology that doesn't include the title character ("Cat Feud" in the Elmer Fudd tape; "Hypochondri-Cat" in the Foghorn Leghorn tape; "Much Ado about Nutting" in the Pepe Le Pew tape).

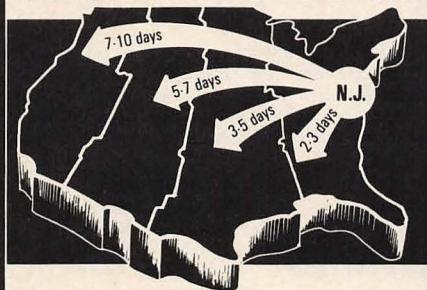
You could exclude cartoons that are already included on other recent Warner anthologies. ("What's Opera, Doc?" and "Rabbit Seasoning" on the Fudd tape are also on the Chuck Jones collection. "The Rabbit of Seville" from the Fudd tape is also on the Mel Blanc collection. "For Scent-imental Reasons" on the Le Pew tape is also on the Jones collection.) And you could fit more than nine cartoons featuring one character on each cassette.

But there is one good reason for buying all three of these tapes: quality. These cassettes have gorgeous, lushly colored, unedited prints of some of the funniest, most imaginative cartoons ever to come out of any studio. Even at 30¢ per minute, these are three cartoon collections that are well worth paying for and keeping.

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# 'The House Of Blue Leaves': Smooth Move From Broadway To Tube



Piling on elements and characters for one helluva farcical traffic jam.

## THE HOUSE OF BLUE LEAVES ★★★★

*Swoosie Kurtz, John Mahoney, Christine Baranski, Julie Hagerty. Directed for TV by Kirk Browning from the stage play directed by Jerry Zaks. 1987. 120 min. (PBS; May 25, time TBA)*

By Robert DiMatteo

The '86 New York stage revival of John Guare's '70 hit *The House of Blue Leaves* was one of the few heartening events in a dismal theatrical season—a revival that seemed fresher and more exciting than almost any of the season's new plays. Now comes *American Playhouse's* taped record of that production and it is perfection—savagely funny, lyrical, disturbing, superbly acted and staged.

Viewers who don't know John Guare's writing, or know it only through his screenplay for the '80 hit *Atlantic City*, are in for some remarkable surprises. As a playwright, Guare manages to convey a teeming delight in the world, even as he uncovers the darkest sides of human nature. His plays have a wonderful grasp of life's absurdities, and they're filled with people who speak in rich, dense paragraphs. Yet Guare also has a terrific ear for one-liners (almost

as good as Neil Simon's), and there's a streak of show-biz savvy running through even his most perverse writing. Some of us Guare aficionados may prefer his later plays (such as *Landscape of the Body* and *Bosoms and Neglect*), but *Blue Leaves* makes a great introduction to Guare's work.

The play takes place during that day in October 1965 when the Pope actually came to visit New York. All else is inspired fiction. This by turns bitter and touching farce centers on the Queens apartment of Artie Shaughnessy (Mahoney), a zookeeper who dreams of being a famous songwriter, and

his lunatic wife, Bananas (Kurtz). Artie is about to run away with his scheming floozy of a girlfriend, Bunny (Baranski). Meanwhile, Artie's son has gone AWOL from Fort Dix hoping to assassinate the visiting Pope, and Artie's former buddy, now a movie magnate, has come to town with his ditzy deaf girlfriend (Hagerty). Guare keeps piling on elements and characters, and then, in the second act, he creates one helluva farcical traffic jam.

On stage, director Jerry (*The Marriage of Bette and Boo, Sister Mary Ignatius*) Zaks orchestrated the collision of egos and expectations with stunning precision. Kirk Browning has rescaled everything for the TV screen, and he's done a fine job. The camerawork is flexible and varied, without calling much attention to itself. This video *House* achieves the kind of immediacy that only the best seats in a theater can facilitate. There's been no opening out of the play, nor, as best I can tell, any major changes in the staging. Correctly, the makers have assumed that a simple and clear rendering of this stage production of this play is enough.

All the parts are played with that extra bit of flair—quirkiness essential to Guare's vision. Kurtz is fabulous as Bananas. She makes a crazy woman's pain both hilarious and heartbreaking—and she doesn't cheat by playing insane as coy, or by stepping outside of the character to let us see the actress in the part. For me, however, the biggest surprise is Baranski's splendid work as the somehow irresistible if loud and self-centered Bunny. On stage, I had seen Stockard Channing make the (not very) dumb blonde part sing and soar, so I wasn't prepared for the trashy wit and swirling fleshiness of Baranski's Bunny. What a dame! The brass lungs sound bequeathed from Judy Holliday.

## ABOUT THESE TV REVIEWS AND PREVIEWS

The programs in this section are scheduled for telecast within a one-month period beginning with this issue's publication date of May 15. Times listed are the TV start times (EST); running times do not include commercials and other interruptions. Listings for a.m. begin at midnight. All dates and times subject to change. Some programs may be telecast on additional dates or times to those listed. □ indicates closed captions for the hearing impaired.

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**HBO:** Home Box Office  
**Lifetime**  
**MTV:** Music Television  
**NBC**  
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**Tempo** (formerly SPN)  
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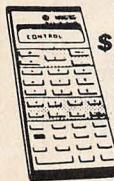


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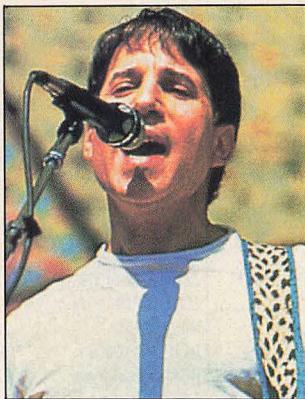
# The Best Of Upcoming Watchables And Tapeables

## MUSIC

### PAUL SIMON'S GRACELAND: THE AFRICAN CONCERT

*SHO; May 16, 10 p.m.; 90 min.*

A concert version of Simon's award-winning *Graceland* album, taped at Rufala Stadium in the Zimbabwe



Graceland's Simon: *Rufala calling*.

capital of Harare. It features 24 illustrious African musicians, including South African exiles Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba.

### VLADIMIR HOROWITZ: THE LAST ROMANTIC

*PBS; May 22, 9 p.m.; 90 min.*

The documentary team of Albert and the late David Maysles (which made *Ozawa*) shot this portrait of the great, reclusive pianist in private conversation and performance.

## AWARDS

### AMERICAN COMEDY AWARDS

*ABC; May 19, TBA; 90 min.*

That's right—another awards show. It's the first time out for this tribute to the chuckle and the belly laugh, in which 600 comedy performers have chosen their faves.

## COMEDY

### NOT QUITE HUMAN

*Disney Channel; June TBA.*

An original TV-movie for the whole family. Alan (*Growing Pains*) Thicke plays a scientist who invents a teenage boy and sends him to high school—the ultimate test of passing for real. (Oh, yeah?)

### A PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION, WITH GARRISON KEILLOR

*Disney Channel; June 13, 9 p.m., 90 min.*

Fans of Keillor's homespun radio nostalgia (turned into a TV show by Disney in March) will certainly want to tune into this—possibly the final

episode of the whole series before he moves to Denmark.

## SPORTS

### 16 DAYS OF GLORY, PART II

*Disney Channel; June 20, time TBA; 150 min.*

*Part II* of Bud Greenspan's ViRA award-winning documentary feature about the '84 Los Angeles Summer Olympics. A study of people as much as sports, this edition profiles Greg Louganis, gold medalist for diving and the first diving competitor to score more than 700 points in an Olympic competition; Carl Lewis, the leading track-and-field athlete; and Koji Gushiken of Japan, the gold medalist in men's all-around gymnastics, among others.

## DANCE

### KAROLE ARMITAGE

*Bravo; May 17, 7 p.m., May 30, 11 p.m.; 60 min.*

The innovative, hard-edged dancer-choreographer performs excerpts from two new works and discusses her controversial art.

## DOCUMENTARY

### ABC NEWS CLOSE-UP: ADDICTION

*ABC; May 22, 10 p.m.; 60 min.*

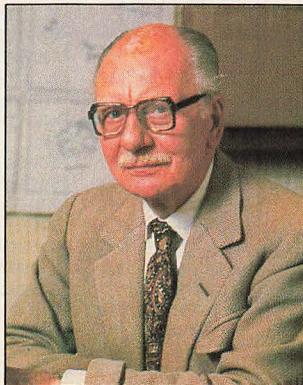
Haven't we heard just about everything there is to hear about the effects of alcohol and cocaine abuse? Not according to ABC, which says it will offer some fresh biological understanding in this one-hour primetime documentary.

## DRAMA

### QUARTERMAINE'S TERMS

*PBS; May 15, 9 p.m.; 120 min.*

The original London cast performs Simon Gray's funny, poignant play



Quartermaine's Termer Gielgud.

about a group of men and women who teach English to foreigners in a slightly shabby school in Cam-

bridge. Sir John Gielgud and Edward Fox star. Fox plays a don described as the "kindest, gentlest, most pathetic and incompetent."

## CONSPIRACY: THE TRIAL OF THE CHICAGO EIGHT

*HBO; May 16, time TBA.*

A super cast re-creates one of the most controversial political trials of the turbulent '60s. With dialog often drawn directly from court transcripts, star power carries the day, with politics a close second. That's Peter Boyle as David Dellinger, Robert Carradine as Rennie Davis, Elliott Gould as D.A. Leonard Weinglass, Robert Loggia as William Kunstler, Michael Lembeck as Abbie Hoffman, Carl Lumbly as Bobby Seale and Martin Sheen as government witness James Marion Hunt.



Silence Is Golden's Gish sisters (Lillian, Dorothy): speechless.

## MUTINY IN THE TRENCHES

*A&E; four-part miniseries beginning May 20 at 8:30 p.m.; 90 min. each episode.*

A dramatic portrayal of the most notorious British traitor of World War I, Percy Toplis. When this miniseries first aired in England, under the title *The Monocled Mutineer*, it caused quite a stir and was attacked as a glamorization of a Benedict Arnold figure. The already beleaguered head of the BBC lost his job over it.

## SILENTS

### SILENCE IS GOLDEN

*A&E; Mondays at 8 p.m. throughout June; program lengths vary.*

Here's a nifty little festival of five silent movie classics, with background scores. Included: *The Mark of Zorro* with Douglas Fairbanks (June 1); the original tinted (not colorized) version of *Phantom of the Opera* with Lon Chaney (June 8); and *Orphans of the Storm* with Dorothy and Lillian Gish.

## SUMMER RERUN

### THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

*PBS; 14-part miniseries beginning May 24 at 9 p.m., two-hour opening episode; continuing through August 23; 60 min. each episode.*

The long-awaited return of one of the most honored miniseries in TV history. A lavish, character-rich adaptation of Paul Scott's *Raj Quartet*, it studies the dramatic final years of British rule in India. The production made virtual household names out of such fine English actors as Art Malik, Susan Wooldridge, Tim Pigott-Smith, Geraldine James, Charles Dance and especially Dame Peggy Ashcroft.

Never mind when you'll be away on vacation. This is the kind of program for which VCR timers and programmability were created. (R.D.M.)

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**2.** Find out if warranties, shipping, handling and insurance costs are included in the quoted price. Does the price as listed include a rebate?

**3.** Keep a record of your order including: the company's name, address and phone number and information about the item you purchased. Save your canceled check or a copy of your money order.

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- Your local postmaster. Ask for the name and address of the appropriate postal "inspector-in-charge."
- Your state or local consumer protection office, or the agency nearest the company.



## ...SUMMER SMASHES

Continued from page 51

### RETURN OF THE SEVEN (MGM/UA)

Their first return, that is. With Yul Brynner, Warren Oates, Jordan Christopher. Directed by Burt Kennedy. 1966.

**WILD ROVERS (MGM/UA)** A cult favorite among many Western fans. It's about two cowboys who rob a bank on a whim. With William Holden, Ryan O'Neal, Lynn Carlin, Karl Malden, Rachel Roberts. Directed by Blake Edwards. 1971.

### HEARTS OF THE WEST (MGM/UA)

Another cult favorite, this one's about a would-be Western writer who arrives in Hollywood and gets turned into a B-Western

star. With Jeff Bridges, Alan Arkin, Andy Griffith, Donald Pleasence. 1975.

## MUSICALS

### THE PRODUCERS (Embassy)

Mel Brooks' wild and woolly farce about two Broadway producers deliberately trying to stage a flop for tax purposes—the incredible *Springtime for Hitler*. Being rereleased as part of Embassy's aptly titled Scents of Humor series. With Zero Mostel, Gene Wilder, Dick Shawn, Kenneth Mars. 1967.

### WONDER MAN (Embassy)

Double the fun and wonderment, with the late Danny Kaye in a dual role. Also with Vera-Ellen, Virginia Mayo, Steve Cochran. Directed by H. Bruce Humberstone. 1945.

**SINCERELY YOURS (Warner)** With candelabras. The late Liberace stars in a remake of George Arliss' '32 *The Man Who Played God*, about an ailing musician. With Dorothy Malone, Joanne Dru. Director: Gordon Douglas. 1955.

## OPERA

**OTELLO (Media)** Verdi's hero (grazie Shakespeare) as sung by Placido Domingo, in a lavish production directed by Franco Zeffirelli (not a TV taping of a live performance). With Justino Diaz, Katia Ricciarelli. 1986.

## CLASSICS

The following five titles will be part of MGM/UA's releases under the banner of Hooray for Hollywood. All are being released for the first time on video.

**CAMILLE (MGM/UA)** The legendary Garbo's most famous movie, as Dumas' ill-fated courtesan. With Robert Taylor, Lionel Barrymore, Laura Hope Crews, Lenore Ulric. B&W. 1936.

**A WOMAN'S FACE (MGM/UA)** The trials and tribulations of a disfigured woman who undergoes plastic surgery. Arguably Crawford's MGM peak. With Melvyn Douglas, Conrad Veidt. B&W. 1941.

**THE CITADEL (MGM/UA)** Not the recent TV miniseries, but the original movie version of A.J. Cronin's popular novel about a doctor who sells out. With Robert Donat (in an Oscar-nominated role), Rosalind Russell, Ralph Richardson, Rex Harrison, Elinor Williams. B&W. 1939.

**BONNIE SCOTLAND (MGM/UA)** Laurel and Hardy in kilts—and at sea in the desert yet. A rarely seen feature from the boys' golden years. With June Lang, James Finlayson. B&W. 1935.

**PRESENTING LILY MARS (MGM/UA)** One of Judy Garland's most-overlooked "middle period" movies, adapted from a Booth Tarkington story about a would-be Broadway star. Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm" provides Judy with a showstopper finale. With Van Heflin, Martha Eggerth, Bob Crosby, Tommy Dorsey. B&W. 1943.

Come late summer, MGM/UA will also add new titles to its successful Great Books series. Set for video premieres:

**ANNA KARENINA (MGM/UA)** Greta Garbo's second version (made 10 years after her silent one) of Tolstoy's romantic Russian tragedy. Besides the great Greta, the outstanding cast includes Fredric March, Basil Rathbone, Maureen O'Sullivan, Freddie Bartholomew. Directed by George Cukor. B&W. 1937.

**TARAS BULBA (MGM/UA)** Gogol's tale of 16th century Cossack warriors in the Ukraine. With Yul Brynner, Tony Curtis, Christine Kaufman, Sam Wanamaker. Director: J. Lee Thompson. 1962.

**NIGHT OF THE HUNTER (MGM/UA)** Charles Laughton's only movie as a director, with a screenplay by James Agee (from

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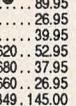
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the Davis Grubb novel), about a religious fanatic who terrorizes an old enemy's kids. With Robert Mitchum, Lillian Gish, Shelley Winters, Peter Graves. B&W. 1953.

## ANIMATION

**HERE'S MICKEY!** (Walt Disney) Three never-before-on-video Mickey Mouse cartoons from the mid-'30s and early '40s: *Mickey's Garden*, *Mickey's Birthday Party* and *Orphans' Benefit*. Similar animated releases from Disney will include *Here's Pluto*, *Here's Goofy* and *Here's Donald*.

## SILENTS

Following up on the success of its video release of the silent air epic *Wings* (1927), Paramount plans more releases this summer of silent classics, with original organ music played on a mighty theater Wurlitzer by Gaylord Carter. Among them:

**THE TEN COMMANDMENTS** (Paramount) Cecil B. DeMille's original 1923 classic, juxtaposing a modern story with its Biblical epic (unlike DeMille's '56 remake).

**THE WEDDING MARCH** (Paramount) Erich von Stroheim's scathing "last word" on the degeneracy of the Austro-Hungarian nobility in the early part of this century. With Stroheim, ZaSu Pitts. 1927.

Also scheduled for release as part of the Paramount series: Josef von Sternberg's *The Last Command* ('28) with Emil Jannings; *Old Ironsides* ('26), one of the era's most famous sea epics; and *Running Wild* ('27) with W.C. Fields.

## INTERNATIONAL

**FORBIDDEN GAMES** (Embassy) René Clément's harrowing story of French kids whose games become an innocently perverse extension of their war experiences. With Brigitte Fossey, Georges Poujouly. In French, with English subtitles. B&W. 1951.

**THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY** (Embassy) Also deeply and provocatively, the Ingmar Bergman way. Four characters on a secluded island. An Oscar winner. In Swedish, with English titles. B&W. 1962.

**JOUR DE FETE** (Embassy) Jacques Tati's droll adventures of a smalltown postman caught up in Bastille Day celebrations. In French, with English subtitles (though hardly needed for Tati's comedy). B&W. 1949.

**SHAKESPEARE WALLAH** (Embassy) James (*Room with a View*) Ivory's drama of an Indian playboy who romances a member of a touring English Shakespearean troupe. With Shashi Kapoor, Felicity (TV's *Good Neighbors*) Kendall. B&W. 1965.

**MAYERLING** (Embassy) The first and most renowned (if also historically inaccurate) movie account of the tragic romance of Austria-Hungary's reform-minded Archduke Rudolf and the teenage Maria Vetsura. With Charles Boyer, Danielle Darrieux. Directed by Anatole Litvak. B&W. 1936.

**SYLVIE AND THE PHANTOM** (Embassy) A whimsical and romantic ghost

story, rated by many as one of the all-time best French movies. With Odette Joyeux and Jacques Tati. Directed by Claude (*Devil in the Flesh, Douce*) Autant-Lara. B&W. 1950.

**DONKEY SKIN** (Embassy) A wry charmer of a French fairy tale for adults, adapted from a Perrault original by Jacques (*Umbrellas of Cherbourg, Lola*) Demy and beautifully photographed. With Catherine Deneuve, Jean Marais, Jacques Perrin. In French, with English subtitles. 1971.

**HIROSHIMA, MON AMOUR** (Embassy) Alain Resnais' provocative classic that helped change the accepted linear way movies told their stories till then. It's about a French actress and a Japanese architect who meet and fall in love in postwar

Hiroshima. With Emmanuelle Riva, Eiji Okada, Pierre Barband. In French, with English subtitles. B&W. 1960.

**KAMERADSCHAFT** (Embassy) Still one of the most powerful of the early talkies—about a French mine disaster near the German border and how generations of national hatreds are bypassed to help the victims. Directed by G.W. (*Pandora's Box, The Threepenny Opera*) Pabst. B&W. 1931.

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memorabilia. Directed by Richard Lester. 1965. (A Criterion edition of *A Hard Day's Night* is also in the works, but probably won't be ready until later in the year.)

**BLADE RUNNER** (*Criterion Collection*) To run letterboxed in its original widescreen dimensions, in CAV format with digital sound. The disc will also include cut footage and an alternate ending. With Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Daryl Hannah. Directed by Ridley Scott. 1982.

**THE GRADUATE** (*Criterion Collection*) A baccalaureate CAV edition of the complete Mike Nichols comedy classic. The disc also includes some of the screen tests made for various roles, including the leads, plus a second-soundtrack analysis of the

movie by UCLA's Howard Suber. With Dustin Hoffman, Anne Bancroft. 1967. **THE SEVENTH SEAL** (*Criterion Collection*) Ingmar Bergman's medieval parable, in its original 1956 Swedish version, with English subtitles. The second soundtrack will include a commentary by Bergman specialist Peter Cowie. Also included: A complete Bergman filmography, with brief excerpts from some of the movies.

**IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE** (*Criterion Collection*) It will be for Capra fans, for, in addition to the original 1946 B&W movie, there'll be second LV soundtrack material provided by Jeanne Basinger, author of the bestselling paperback about the movie. With James Stewart, Donna Reed. □

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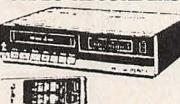
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## ...THE PUSHER

Continued from page 53

America? Will remote control someday pose the same threat as aerosol spray cans or acid rain? As far as I know, there has been little hard scientific data collected about the overall use of remote control. The ultimate effect on society may take years to glean.

One thing of which I'm already certain: A remote control in the hands of a neurotic person, such as myself, is a dangerous instrument. My affliction has had a very long gestation period, beginning with the RM-503. A week before hosting a Super Bowl party in 1978, my then-spouse equivalent (now my wife) realized that our little TV was woefully inadequate. We called a local discount house and ordered a 26-inch Sony Trinitron, as casually as one would send out for a pizza. If the biggest direct-view screen at the time wasn't enough to impress my friends, my adroit manipulation of the compact, perfectly balanced RM-503 remote control was.

It wasn't long before we noticed that our attention span had a coefficient that roughly coincided with the Sweathogs on *Welcome Back, Kotter*. With 20-odd active cable channels at our disposal, I became a manic channel changer in less than a year. Proud of the way I could discern a) the name of the program, b) the principal cast and c) the entire plot in around 10 seconds, my jealous wife decided she wanted in on the action. She claims to have the fastest right thumb east of the Mississippi. We watch no program, with the exception of old movies, longer than 12 minutes. If pressed, however, my wife will insist that she can't stand my incessant channel switching.

In those early days, the great breakthrough in remote control technology was, of course, the muting button. I cannot understand how the Madison Avenue cabal ever let the equipment manufacturers get away with that one. Becoming a Top Muter is an acquired skill, requiring the reflexes of a seasoned fighter pilot. Today, my ability to press the muting button just before a commercial begins, and to return the sound without missing a word of a program, is one of my proudest achievements.

The VCR, our second most coveted appliance, heralded yet another breakthrough in feeding the remote neurotic personality (soon to be an accredited disorder by the American Psychiatric Association). The fast-forward scan button gave millions of people a new liberation from time-shifted programming, and it excluded commercials and the usual dreck from the airwaves. Time compression became desirable, and I began to live my home screen life at supersonic speed. There is something strangely appealing about watching *Out of Africa* in 22 minutes. Lovely movie.

A remote control and a VCR were made for each other, and no self-respecting recorder can live without a trustworthy re-

mote. When I first bought a VCR in 1982, my wife and I began having conversations like the following every night.

"Hey honey, have you seen the remote?"

"Which one?"

"The VCR."

"Look under the bed or under the cat."

Remote control eventually suffused itself into the mundane. If one of us has a particularly tough day at the office, a pillow-talk rejoinder is likely to sound like, "Hey, where were you on that damn mute?" Sexism, of course, is also an issue, albeit a minor one in our household. While there is a certain degree of power involved in who controls the remote, we have a very egalitarian relationship. Kamikaze democracy prevails and seems to work; that is, whoever has the remote is its master.

Hardened videophiles had different, far more serious strains of remote madness. They had multi-VCR setups, Beta and VHS recorders at the least, probably a videodisc player, too. And they often coped with the problem of wandering infrared rays, taping the wrong thing on the wrong format and whatnot, when the machines became confused by the little gizmos' commands.

Thanks to General Electric's marvelous Control Central remote, the current model of which handles three boxes in one, my viewing pyrotechnics have cooled considerably. GE, Zenith and Sony's infrared rays live together happily without making our tube watching more complicated than it already is. Most of our remotes are in a drawer—neither my wife nor I know where—forever relegated to that electronic graveyard of obsolescence. We have given serious thought to opening a previously owned remote dealership.

Remote control technology is both more complicated and simpler than it ever has been. Never mind that when I see a new remote (such as Sony's multiscreened, liquid crystal display Access 401), I get the same sweaty feeling an airline pilot does when he goes for his annual check ride in a 747 flight simulator.

I now own four TVs. On the 13-inch job, bought last year, I suppose, to fill in a missing size in the household collection, I made a critical error. I ordered it without remote control, just to save \$100. *Mon Dieu!* I didn't know you must press two buttons, the channel number and "enter," to travel from channel 2 to 22 (network news to CNN, for example), and I am sick and angry for my penury. I am paying the price in inconvenience, not to mention all the time lost getting up from my Barcalounger to hop back and forth between the Lakers-Sixers and the Celtics-Bulls games. I've calculated that if I live to be 73 years old (my current and official life expectancy), I will have wasted 2½ weeks of my life changing the channels manually. It is terribly daunting to reflect on this.

And this brings me to a final, lingering obsession, which I hope will ultimately

fester into a viable commercial venture: *The Remote Control Workout Tape*. Please, do not laugh. Think of the potential, couch potatoes. Who wouldn't want to own a special remote control and the accompanying video (\$29.95) which allows one to burn away calories while taking the obligatory, routine trip around the dial? VHF for the easy workout; the full range of cable for the advanced. Think of the promotional copy: "Lose three ounces watching *Cosby* and *Dynasty*." It may not beat an hour on the racquetball court, but what the hey. At the end of a year, you'll be exercising newly discovered thumb muscles. And there will surely be a better, lighter, cheaper remote control that I can get my paws on. □

## ...SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

Continued from page 57

have a little placard at each hole that shows the layout and the distances. A few seconds of each before the golfers tee off make great establishing shots. Otherwise, record a long shot of the flag at the hole if it has the number on it. For the drives, be behind the tee. For long shots on the fairway, you can be either behind the golfer or, if you have a good lens, behind the hole up on a hill. For the putts, and the short shots to the green, you'll want to be as close to the hole as you can get, and still elevated.

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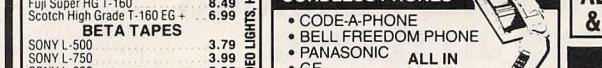
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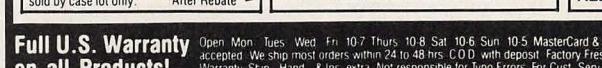
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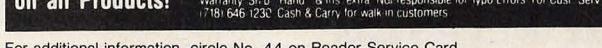
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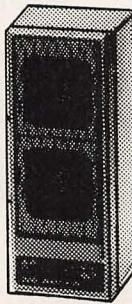


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sports but especially for golf." He suggests that you take advantage of the golf cart if there's no hill around to give you the height you need. Jennett also says you can use a ladder at some tournament events, in areas roped off for photographers. (Jennett points out that the PGA doesn't allow videotaping of the final round of any of its events.)

As for audio, you can't beat that whispered commentary golf broadcasts are known for. And remember to keep the viewer informed each time you change your shot; when you're editing in the camera—by turning your camera on and off a lot—you may forget to give the scores or tell which shot out of the hole's par each shot is. Don't ham it up too much: You don't have to be Bogie to watch the birdie.

## RUNNING

With so many racing enthusiasts crowding the field at local 5K and 10K events, and even marathons, the videotaping gets competitive. There aren't many good spots for taping at most race sites, but there are too many people with cameras. To be a winner here, you'll have to do a little extra planning.

The most exciting way to shoot the start of a race is to be elevated and in front and to the side of the start. If you can get the clock in the picture, even better; if you have a stopwatch character generator in your camera, that's almost as good. When the race starts, everyone will be running toward you. Keep aiming at the start until you see your subject. Decide upon a distinctive piece of clothing (maybe a headband or hat) to follow so you'll be able to pick this sole brother up in the crowd. You can follow him with the camera until he's out of sight.

Then you have to get across to the midway point (see chart) to pick up the progress. Once you've done that, it's time to race back to the finish line. Again, place yourself down from it so that finishers are coming toward the camera. When your subject finishes, get a shot of him or her with the clock in the background. And don't miss the postrace dramatics of falling to the ground, wrapping up in silver mylar capes or whatever. And let your subject comment on his or her effort.

You don't have to worry about audio. The race is going to speak for itself, so just pick up crowd sounds. Make sure you don't stand next to some loudmouth who keeps shouting, "Way to go!"

Most important of all: Do not run with the camera unless you're going to offer your home viewers Dramamine. □

## ...AND NOW, CD-V

Continued from page 59

Although Philips appears determined to make CD-V a success, the format has already provoked a good deal of controversy. Some experts wonder whether Philips can convince enough other electronics

manufacturers to back the CD-V system. So far, Matsushita (the parent company of Panasonic, Quasar and Technics) and Yamaha have announced plans to introduce CD-V players; Philips will bring out players in the US through its subsidiary, Magnavox; and others are said to be interested. But not all the manufacturers plan to go along with every aspect of Philips' CD-V system. For example, Pioneer, which has been struggling to promote laser videodiscs under the LaserVision trademark for years, strongly resists Philip's decision to use the CD-Video name to describe all three disc sizes.

Will consumers get caught in the middle of these battles? Prospective buyers have a right to wonder whether Philips can make a success of CD-V. After all, Philips was the originator of the laser format in the first place. But the company eventually gave up on trying to sell it, leaving Pioneer to carry the laser video torch virtually alone. And even if Philips and other companies do stick with the CD-V, many consumers may find the whole concept—involving four types of discs and a variety of hardware configurations—too confusing. Even the name is confusing, especially considering that most video consumers don't understand the laser format, and many think that discs died out when RCA withdrew its CED disc format.

To put the CD-V development in perspective, it's important to understand just how it works. CD-Video takes advantage of the basic similarity between laser videodiscs and audio compact discs. Both systems use a laser beam to read a signal recorded in tiny pits inside the disc's shiny surface; in fact, the two systems were designed to be compatible. Of course, CD-V doesn't mark the first time CD and laser video technology have been combined. Over two years ago, Pioneer introduced the first laser disc player that could play both audio CDs and videodiscs. Videodiscs that combine moving images with CD-type digital soundtracks have been available almost as long. CD-Video just moves further along that road by putting video images on the smallest disc for the first time.

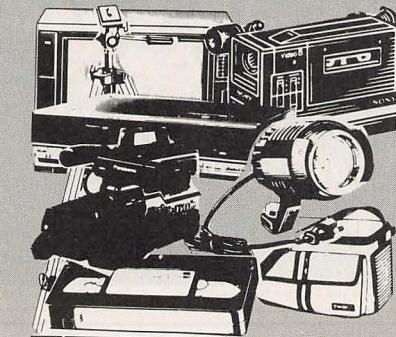
These five-inch CD-Vs, tinted gold to distinguish them from the usual silver CDs, will be the heart of Philips' effort to promote the format. Although the five-inch CD-Vs will carry a conventional laser video signal, they will be different from other videodiscs in one major respect: Because of their smaller size, a CD-V player will need to spin them at a higher speed than it would audio-only CDs or larger laser discs to produce a picture. (This is due to the disc's small diameter; in order to move the same number of pits past the laser each second, a higher rotation speed is necessary compared to that of eight- or 12-inch discs, much the way a car with smaller wheels needs to spin them faster to attain a certain speed.)

According to Philips CD-V engineer V. Oudeusden, a CD-V played in a CD-V

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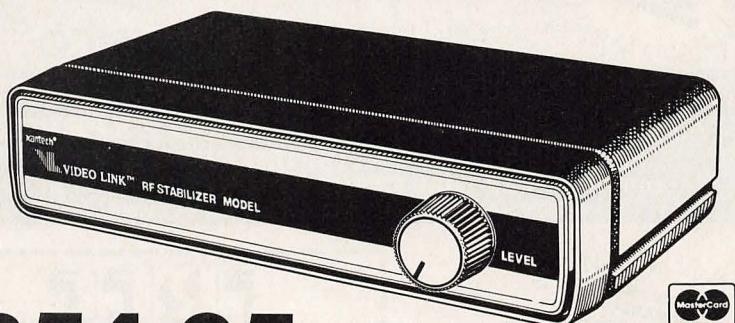
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player will start out at the usual audio-only speed of 500 rpm. At the end of the 20-minute audio-only portion the player will automatically speed up to 2,250 rpm to start the five-minute video portion, and the laser will jump to the outer edge of the disc where that section begins. As the laser moves in from the edge, the player gradually accelerates, reaching a top speed of 2,700 rpm. Although it would be theoretically possible to make five-inch CD-Vs with much longer video portions, that would require still higher speeds since it would mean laying the signal closer to the center of the disc. Right now, there are no plans to offer five-inch CD-Vs with more than five minutes of video.

The need for higher playing speeds means that the five-inch CD-Vs due soon will not be completely compatible with today's CD or laser disc players. While the audio portion of the disc will play on any CD player, the video section can't be played on either an ordinary CD player or today's videodisc machines. The video section of a five-inch CD-V can only be played on new CD-V players. On the other hand, eight- and 12-inch CD-Vs are completely compatible with today's laser players because, to repeat, they are laser videodiscs.

Philips plans to introduce two different types of CD-V players. In June, Philips' subsidiary, Magnavox, will unveil its first CD-V model, a combination player expected to carry a list price of about \$750. The "combi player," as Philips execs call it, will be able to play every type of disc available: five-inch audio-only CDs, five-inch CD-Vs and eight- and 12-inch laser videodiscs. A smaller "dedicated" player—one that will play only five-inch CDs and CD-Vs—will come next with a list price of about \$500. Both will include most CD player features.

Similar models are on the way from a host of other electronics manufacturers. Philips cites agreements with Sony, Pioneer, Hitachi, Yamaha, Matsushita, Toshiba, Mitsubishi and others. However, sharp disagreements between some equipment makers over the goal of CD-Video might mar the launch of the new technology, leaving consumers to figure out the format for themselves. For example, Japan's Matsushita, which has announced that it will introduce a CD-V player, doesn't go along with all aspects of the CD-V concept. In Japan, Matsushita subsidiary JVC sells a videodisc system called VHD which competes with the laser video format. Therefore, Matsushita doesn't plan to make a player that can handle the eight- and 12-inch laser discs; it will stick to making five-inch CD-V players only. And Pioneer, as mentioned above, has its problems with CD-V as well. Pioneer USA president Ken Kai comments that "the CD-V technology is fine, but when it comes to expanding the CD-V name to cover all laser videodiscs, I'm opposed to it." Pioneer does plan to in-

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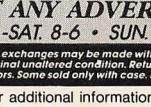


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Introduce a player that can handle the five-inch CD-Vs as soon as the discs become available. "If there's going to be software, Pioneer will have hardware," Kai says.

On the software side, Philips is optimistic that CD-V will take off with a bang. The company expects to have over 200 five-inch CD-Vs available when the system is launched. Initially, most will come from Philips' record company subsidiary PolyGram. But according to PolyGram president Jan Timmer, a host of other major record companies are also committed to the project, including A&M, Capitol, EMI, Chrysalis, Island, MCA, RCA/Ariola, Virgin and the Warner Communications Group. Most of the five-inch titles will be pop and rock material, but PolyGram has over 100 classical programs featuring the Vienna Philharmonic slated for CD-V release.

But for consumers who invest in the combi player—just like most VCR owners—the most important type of software is bound to be movies. Philips hopes the momentum of CD-V will help turn laser discs of movies into a mass market item for the first time. So far, laser video has appealed primarily to a small elite of video connoisseurs, a group Timmer describes as "the quiche and Volvo set." If CD-V combi players can successfully ride CD's coattails into a large number of homes, laser videodiscs could become quite popular among movie fans.

The success of CD-V could be a boon for today's laser disc fans. If major movie studios put more emphasis on disc releases because of the CD-V phenomenon, it could mean more variety and possibly lower prices for disc lovers. Warner Home Video president Warren Lieberfarb thinks the movie industry will work to boost CD-V. He predicts "unique, industry-wide support for this system and the software to support it." It seems natural that the movie companies would prefer selling laser discs to selling

videocassettes. For one thing, since pressing videodiscs requires a multimillion dollar facility, it would be impossible for small-time pirates to run off illegal disc versions of laser releases. More important, movie studios would much prefer selling videodiscs, which people buy to keep, instead of videocassettes, which most people just rent. Lieberfarb predicts the various movie studios will work together to create special collectible packages on disc such as "Best Picture Academy Award Winners," "The Best of Clint Eastwood," "The 25 Great Westerns," and so on.

There are a few flies in the CD-V ointment, however. JVC's announcement of Super VHS (see "Newsbreaks," May '86 VR) will undercut the claim that laser video offers the best picture quality available. According to the latest word on Super VHS, prerecorded "Super" cassettes won't arrive for quite some time. Nevertheless, even the possibility of prerecorded videocassettes boasting over 400 lines of picture resolution may be enough to dull the appeal of CD-V. Philips executives counter that they might consider introducing Super CD-Video if Super VHS becomes a threat.

Only days before Philips introduced its CD-V concept to the world, GE's RCA Labs unveiled a CD-based video technology potentially far more powerful. Called Digital Video Interactive (DVI), the new system can pack up to an hour of full-motion video on a single CD with a unique system of digital compression. Unfortunately, a consumer version of the DVI player seems unlikely for the time being (see "Looking Ahead" in this issue).

Another computer-based enhancement of CD is likely to make an appearance before long, however. CD-Interactive (CD-I) players which should arrive by early '88, make use of a separate personal computer to allow a wide range of data storage and interactive

functions. Timmer describes the technology as "the logical evolution of CD." The CD-V players due here soon will include the digital inputs and outputs necessary to allow computer control, say Philips executives. When the external interactive control system arrives, CD-V could evolve into "CD-V-I," they add.

In the near future, Philips and the other companies attempting to launch the CD-V concept will have their hands full. It's an open question whether the magic CD name will be enough to ensure CD-V's success in the US where consumers have embraced the VCR but remained skeptical about videodiscs. But from the point of view of consumers interested in top quality laser video, the renewed attention to the disc format can only help. □

## ...COMING CLEAN

*Continued from page 62*

tape path—cleaning anything that gets in their way. Ambico, Allsop, Memorex, RCA, Recoton and Discwasher all include variations on the wet/dry theme in their current catalogs.

In reaction to the antiabrasion movement, wet systems have proliferated. Some observers, and some consumers as well, experience difficulties with these systems. Detractors of the wet systems accuse them of introducing undesirable moisture into the VCR, negatively affecting the various torques and tensions within the cassette drive system and endangering the delicate glass ferrite heads. This last difficulty stemmed from the coarseness of the ribbon, fiber or cloth that carried out the actual cleaning.

Many manufacturers have moved away from traditional audio head cleaning materials over the past few years. Alan F. Davis, marketing director for Memorex, explains that the company's particle-lock



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material "picks up debris and pushes it back into the weave, where it can't be redistributed into the tape path." As for the excessive moisture problem, Davis asserts, "You'd have to empty a pretty good portion of the bottle [of cleanser] into the cassette before that became a problem." Still, he echoes the sentiments of other wet-system proponents when he says, "Only use the recommended amount."

Whichever side you choose, remember these three important rules:

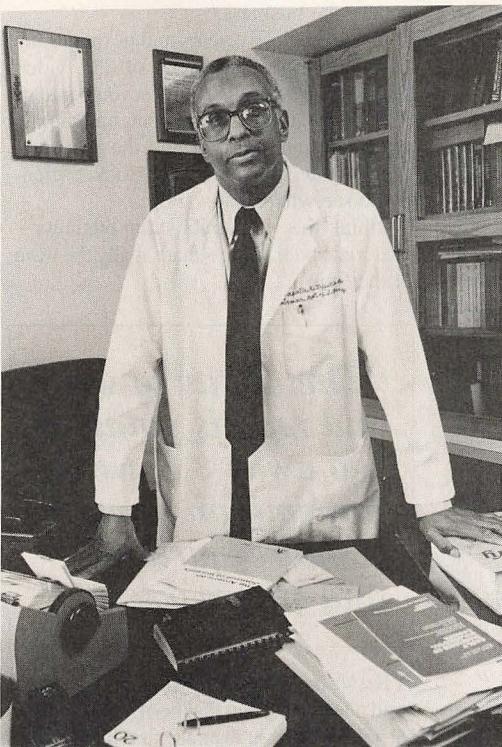
1. Follow your manufacturer's recommendations on head cleaning frequency. Otherwise, only use a head cleaner when your VCR exhibits symptoms of dirty heads.

2. When using wet or wet/dry systems, only use the recommended amount of cleaning solution. (*More is not better.*)

3. If your dirty-head symptoms don't clear up after using the cleaner for the prescribed amount of time, you should have a service technician inspect the machine.

As suggested earlier, the head cleaning issue presents voters with some of the '88 campaign's most difficult decisions. Recent scandals notwithstanding (a California consumer watchdog group recently tried, with a resounding lack of success, to ban video head cleaners), the products and positions continue to proliferate—further perplexing the body politic. Now, at least, when you draw the curtain and pull the lever, you know what to expect. □

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## ...MICHAEL NESMITH

Continued from page 65

isn't even going to be there. It's going to be over. You're going to see saturation in five years, and you'll begin to see a decline in 10. It may well be history in 10, because the new technology on the horizon will make the VCR and videocassette obsolete.

**VR:** Like what?

**NESMITH:** Well, direct delivery, direct down-loading—where you have a keypad on the front of your television set and call up the data bank and load into your television the program that you want to see. It loads in a matter of seconds, and then you play it back at your own will and in your own time. It could be disk based, it could be chip based. The technology is in place, but it's not going to mature for another two years, and then it's going to take awhile for the customers to get going on it.

**VR:** You once said that entertainment companies should do research and development, like other companies do. What did you mean by that?

**NESMITH:** Like a farm team. There should be a small group of people whose job it is to ferret out new, untried, unmarketable, unusual stuff, give it a place to generate and build—a school, a training ground.

**VR:** Like the old studio system?

**NESMITH:** In a way. There's such a premium on hot young talent. And yet, what companies want is not something that's new, they want something that will fit into their existing system, that the existing system hasn't seen before. It's a very curious demand to put on any discipline, much less the creative discipline.

What you get is very young untried people coming up and taking a spin at the wheel to see if it will hit, without any sense of craft or what the future is. It just has to do with, "Gee, can I make a pound of money in the entertainment business?"

I think a studio or television station or anybody should say, "Look, let's allocate a certain amount of money every year and make a place where writers, directors, actors, singers and technicians can make 10- or 20-minute movies. Let them make little demo records, let them pioneer into new territory."

**VR:** Is that how you structure your company?

**NESMITH:** That's precisely the way I structure it. There's a very clear mandate to reach out into the avant-garde, to the unusual, looking for new talent.

**VR:** How does motion picture production fit into the rest of Pacific Arts?

**NESMITH:** In a couple ways. The most important is it keeps us plugged into the creative community. It helps us interface with those folks who come up with the good ideas. And then it's product flow for our home video distribution system.

**VR:** Do you think five years from now, home video will be dominated by the movie companies?

**NESMITH:** Oh, no, not by any stretch of

the imagination. Five years from now, it will be dominated by Pacific Arts and the smaller production labels that are staking out the territory in original programming. Movies are going to shrink to maybe 30 percent of the business.

Just go back five years and pornography was the largest segment of the video business; movies were only seven percent. Now pornography's 10 percent, and movies are some huge percent and the rest fractionizes out. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see what's happening.

I think the video publishing business—electronic publishing—that's really the wave of the future.

*"The ability to write and read is going to go away . . . we'll transmit on a much more spiritual and ethereal level."*

**VR:** Nolan Bushnell, who started Atari, said a few years ago that books will soon be obsolete. Do you ever see that happening?

**NESMITH:** Well, it's already clear that books are not the carrier they once were.

The illiteracy rate has been linked for so long with intelligence that people get very alarmed when they see the illiteracy rate going up. The fact of the matter is that literacy and intelligence don't necessarily match up. It's the ability to manage ideas skillfully that really counts.

The ability to write and read is going to go away in the next hundred years—not because we'll get stupider, but because we'll transmit on a much more spiritual and ethereal level. There's no reason to be afraid of this future. It does not show the decline of civilization.

**VR:** How do you open a bank account on a spiritual and ethereal level? How do you sign a contract?

**NESMITH:** You walk up and you put your handprint over something.

What you're doing is making the same mistake that everybody who looks at the future tries to do. You're saying, "How do we get from here to there on this path we're on." You don't. You throw out everything. Why do you think there are going to be banks . . . checking accounts?

The first time I ever thought about the concept of the written word passing away, I thought, "Wow, what about the Bible? What about the theory of relativity?" And it began to dawn on me, nothing is going to be lost of that. We're going to have higher and much more profound ways of transmitting that to each other.

**VR:** Let's talk about music videos. What's the state of the art?

**NESMITH:** So far, music videos have not been creatively based, they've been marketing-based—the concept being to try to sell a record. So you have the musician who delivers a record to a filmmaker he or she may never know. And the filmmaker then tries to make a film of it. You don't have creative synergy. You don't have anybody really understanding what the point of the creative exercise is. And the music video ends up being kind of a meaningless advertisement. That's not to say that there isn't something such as a good music video.

**VR:** What is a good music video?

**NESMITH:** At its best, you take the emotions, the fundamental underpinnings of the song, and that becomes what you're portraying. And the picture is in line with that emotion, and the song is in line with that emotion. Then the picture enhances key changes, and lyrics enhance picture, and it becomes a symbiotic relationship between the two mediums and makes a third one that's very, very dense. It becomes supercharged, and when you see one that really works, you know.

**VR:** Some articles about you say you grew up dirt poor. Others talk about the fortune your mother made from Liquid Paper. What were the circumstances of your upbringing?

**NESMITH:** Single mother. Only child. Grew up poor is the right word—not destitute. She was a hard-working woman on a clerical secretary level, night jobs doing graphic design. That existed for the first 10, 12, 15 years of my life.

Back when I was 14 or 15 she invented Liquid Paper. I worked with her on that for the first four or five years, then went off to pursue my creative bent and desire to be an artist and a singer, and she went off to pursue Liquid Paper.

**VR:** So that must have caused a pretty dramatic change in your life.

**NESMITH:** Well, she didn't exactly strike gold. It took her 20 years to develop Liquid Paper. When I left, things were still nip and tuck, trying to make ends meet. We didn't go from rags to riches overnight. We went from rags to riches over two decades.

**VR:** You've acted, produced, directed and written in a variety of media. Is there some overall philosophy to your work?

**NESMITH:** To an extent I subscribe to the theory of the whole man—the unlimited capacities of man. It seems to me that we can use our intelligence in an unlimited way. So when I look at the things that can be done, and the opportunities open to me as an artist, I want to do them all. I want to act on the screen, and I want to write songs, and I want to sing, and I want to produce movies, and I want to direct movies, and I want to write movies, and I want to run a business, and I want to put together the delivery system. I don't see any reason why I can't do every single bit of it. □

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JUNE 1987

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# Video Review

## ADVERTISER INDEX

Advertiser	Page	Advertiser	Page	Advertiser	Page
All American Video.....	125	LDC.....	31	Recoton.....	27
Allsop.....	63	Maxell.....	37	Reliable.....	III
CBS Playhouse.....	15	Memtek.....	29	Samsung.....	35
CBS Video Club.....	1	MGM/UA.....	7	Sound TEK.....	121
Continental Video.....	82	Mibro.....	100	Sunshine Camera.....	104
Discwasher.....	Cover 3	Multivision.....	76	SNW.....	124
DT Electronics.....	122	Nationwide.....	123	Super Video.....	107
Electric Mailbox.....	93	New York Camera.....	109	TDK.....	23
Electronic Wholesalers.....	92	New World Video.....	87	Toshiba.....	5,7
Embassy Home Video.....	21	Not Just Video.....	101	Transworld Entertainment.....	33
Empire State Camera.....	118	Olden.....	103	US Mobile Communications.....	124
Executive Photo.....	104	Olympus.....	28	USS Photo.....	110
General Electric.....	Cover 4	Paramount.....	8,9,10,11	Video Age.....	104
Grand Central Camera.....	91	Pioneer.....	24,25	Video Direct.....	102
High Voltage.....	120	Planet Video.....	117	Video Sales.....	89
Home Electronics Hotline.....	105	Proton.....	Cover 2	Wall Street Camera.....	106
Interactive VCR Games.....	101	Quad Squad.....	127	Warren's World.....	119
JVC.....	3,13	Radio Shack.....	75	WDS.....	95
Karl-Lorimar.....	77	RCA.....	71	Weir Electronics.....	122

## Bigger Is Definitely Better: Why CinemaScope And Video Don't Mix

By John Belton

While a host of moviemakers have spoken out lately against colorization, the industry has been strangely silent about another practice that poses as great a threat to the artistic integrity of the medium: scanning (or "pan and scan"). This involves the reprocessing of CinemaScope or other widescreen movies for TV or video, resulting in a loss of as much as 44 percent of the original image. Scanning fills the four-by-three image area of the standard TV set by cutting off the sides (or by panning from one side to another) of the original seven-by-three CinemaScope image.

With colorization, something is *added* to the image—but the unwanted new color can easily be eliminated by the touch of a color-control dial on individual TV sets. With scanning, almost half of the image is *removed*—and no amount of ingenious playing with the controls can restore it!

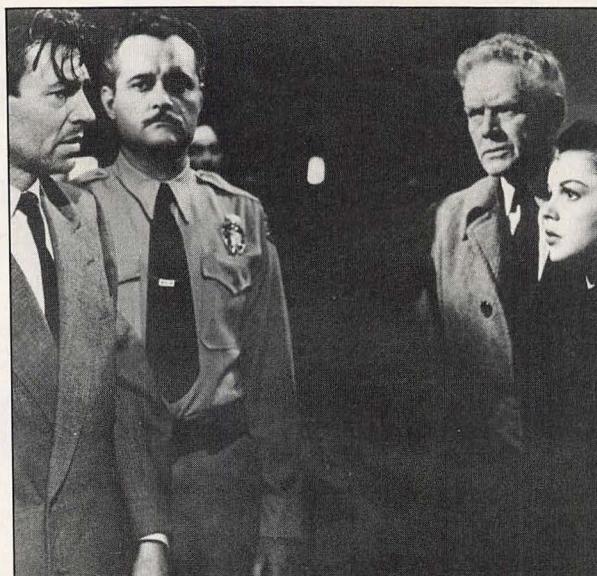
For most viewers, it's easy to see that something is wrong with colorization, not only because color has been added to the original but also because the colorization is often just not very well done. With scanning, however, it's hard to see something that's not there, although most viewers will unconsciously sense that something is wrong. The development of pan-and-scan technology over the years has also helped to disguise the problem. Early three-point scanning (which gave us only the left, center or right portion of the 'Scope image) has been replaced by pan-and-scan systems with virtually an infinite number of positions. Three-point scanning led to some notable disasters, such as the TV prints of George Cukor's *A Star Is Born* in which Judy Garland and Jack Carson, playing a scene in her dressing room standing at opposite sides of the 'Scope frame, are *both* cut out of the scanned version. We see only the empty space between them! Even sophisticated, contemporary pan-and-scan processes occasionally come a cropper against such moviemakers as Blake Edwards or David Lynch who exploit the full width of the 'Scope frame, resulting in scenes that translate talking heads into talking noses on video.

Though the industry as a whole has remained silent about scanning, a few moviemakers have made significant gestures in raising public consciousness about the issue. In 1985, Woody Allen released *Manhattan* on video in the so-called letterbox format, masked on the top and bottom in order to preserve

the same aspect ratio of the original version. More recently, Kurosawa's award-winning *Ran* was distributed on video in a letterboxed format. But in a recent issue of *VR*, reviewer Jeffrey Lyons took exception to this format. Lyons objected to the reduction in image size that letterboxing produces and even went so far as to liken it to colorization, seeing both as desecrations of the original.

Meanwhile, letterboxing has become a factor in the distribution of some older movies. Criterion has prepared letterboxed laser disc versions of Max Ophuls' *Lola Montes*, efficiently using the black masking below the image for the English subtitles, and of Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, which was originally released in RKO's SuperScope (though it was shot in 1.85-to-1). Criterion also plans to release 'Scope versions of *The Graduate* and *Blade Runner* this year.

Though letterboxing is, for me, clearly preferable to scanning, *VR*'s Lyons does have a point; the letterbox format does produce an extremely small image on the average TV screen. For David Shepard, who teaches movie history at USC, "the preservation of a film's



A Star Is Born—and squeezed and scanned for video.

original aspect ratio is almost a trivial point, because the experience of seeing the movie on a small screen is so radically different from that in the theater, not only in terms of image size but also of color and sound." Enterprising theatrical exhibitors have taken advantage of these "irreconcilable differences" by playing up the fact that, even for older movies, theaters can still offer something you can't get at home. The Film Forum in New York City, for example, mounted a two-month retrospective of CinemaScope movies this spring which has been attracting SRO audiences.

From the point of view of many videophiles, letterboxing is both unsightly and inefficient because it wastes 32 percent of the available image area. Whether or not letterboxing is a desecration or, rather, a faithful rendering of the original, it does, with its obvious black bars above and below the oblong image, serve the polemical function of making viewers dramatically aware of the tremendous differences between theatrical and home video formats. Letterboxing reminds us that, where some movies are concerned, if you've only seen them on video, you really haven't seen them. □

John Belton is writing a history of CinemaScope and helped select the movies for the Film Forum series.



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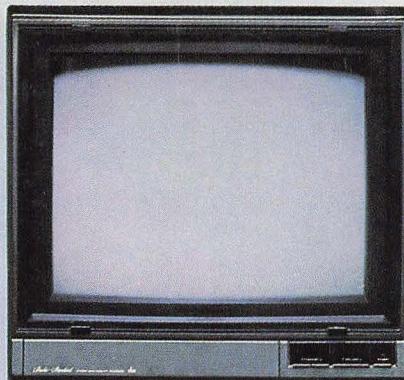


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